JANUARY 1976

MONTHLY REVIEW

N INDEPENDENT SOCIALIST MAGAZINE

VOLUME 27

8

Capital, Technology & Development

HARRY MAGDOFF

Italy

J.B. & R. PROCTOR

Argentina

GILBERT MERKX

Attica Now

ANNETTE T. RUBINSTEIN

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

CONTENTS | VOLUME 27 NUMBER 8 JANUARY 1976

REVIEW OF THE MONTH: Capital, Technology, and Development by Harry Magdoff 1
ATTICA NOW by Annette T. Rubinstein 12
CAPITALIST DEVELOPMENT, CLASS STRUGGLE, AND CRISIS IN ITALY, 1945-1975 by Joanne Barkan Proctor and Robert Proctor 21
ARGENTINA: PERONISM AND POWER by Gilbert W. Merkx 38
MARTI ON THE UNITED STATES, with an Introduction by Philip S. Foner 52
BOOKS: The Anachronism of the Work Ethic by Albert Ruben 61

MONTHLY REVIEW: Published monthly except July and August, when bimonthly, and copyright © 1976, by Monthly Review, Inc. Second class postage paid at New York, N. Y.
EDITORIAL AND BUSINESS: 62 West 14th Street, New York, N. Y. 10011.
Telephone: (212) 691-2555.
Europe: R. Handyside, 21 Theobalds Road, London WCIX 8SL.
Telephone: 01-242-3501.
MR Edizione Italiana: viale Orazio Flacco 15, Bari 70124.
Telephone: 241919, 246157.
MR Greek Edition, Panepistimiou 57, No. 215, Athens 131.
MR German Edition, Mega Press,
Julius Heymanstrasse 1,
6 Frankfurt 1, Federal Republic of Germany.
Unsolicited manuscripts will not be returned unless accompanied by a stamped, self-addressed envelope.
NEWSSTAND DISTRIBUTOR: B. De Boer, 188 High Street, Nutley, N. J.
SUBSCRIPTION PRICE: One year—$11, U.S.; students $9. $13 foreign; students $10. Institutions and libraries—U.S. $16; foreign $18.
By 1st class mail—U.S. $16; elsewhere $19.
By air mail—No. America $18; So. America and Europe $23.
By air mail—Asia (incl. USSR), Africa, Australia $25.
EDITORS: Paul M. Sweezy Harry Magdoff Leo Huberman (1903-1968)
ASSOCIATE EDITOR: Bobbye Ortiz

NOTES FROM THE EDITORS

Some MR subscribers have recently received a mailing inviting them to become MR subscribers. This is not, however, as one reader assumed, because we sent the mailing to part of our own subscription list. Rather it is because those receiving the mailing happened to be on one or more other lists which we selected to test for their responsiveness to our invitation. Before undertaking this effort to get new subscribers we were told by experts in the mail-order business that anything over a one percent return is good. As we go to press, the return from the mailing, which went out about a month ago, is around 1.8 percent. This of course is an average for all the lists tested, some being much better (3 percent or over) and some worse. We can now do another mailing to *all* names on the most productive lists, with an accurately predictable rate of return well above that of the first mailing. At the same time, we will test additional lists, and after that we will again do a mailing to all on those that show the best returns. This is a process which can be repeated until we run out of potentially productive lists, and it has the great advantage of being self-financing in the sense that each successful mailing brings in

(*Continued on inside back cover*)

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

CAPITAL, TECHNOLOGY, AND DEVELOPMENT

By Harry Magdoff

In the mythology of bourgeois social science, capital and technology are the magic that presumably will bring the entire world into the Garden of Eden. Libraries, UN agencies, various economic institutes around the world are bulging with reports and studies telling us how a country can get out of the stage of underdevelopment, how it can lift itself out of the quagmire of poverty and misery. All sorts of ideas and proposals are contained in these publications, but there is one common thread. If you just put in enough capital, if you just introduce enough modern technology, the underdeveloped societies will be vitalized and will start growing on their own.

Now this kind of thinking is not entirely false. Underlying the almost blind faith in the miraculous powers of capital and technology is a sound appreciation of some elementary truths. In order for people to have more food, clothing, medicine, and other necessities, more has to be produced. To produce more, two things are necessary: first, more people have to be engaged in useful productive activity, and I stress the word useful. And second, the labor of the workers and the peasants has to yield a larger amount of goods than is now the case. For both of these purposes, but especially to increase productivity, more and

This is a revised version of a talk given at the October 1975 conference of the Organization of Arab Students in Chicago.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

better equipment is needed. It stands to reason that in order to get more and better equipment, resources (or as some call it, capital) have to be mobilized from either internal or external sources.

The trouble with these simple truths is that when they are abstracted from the concrete, historical circumstances in which they have to be applied, they end up as fetishes—fetishes that tend to obscure the real issues. What these fetishes disguise is the fact that production is a *social activity*. This means that to get at the heart of the problem of production, we must first and foremost focus on people and the social relations into which they enter. Unless we put people, people as producers and people as consumers, at the center of our analysis, we lose sight of what it is all about.

Capital

When we think about capital, we have to understand that there are three aspects to capital, and we should always keep in mind the differences which distinguish them one from another:

(1) Capital is a social relationship. It represents relations among divergent classes in society.

(2) The material component of capital—equipment, tools, machinery—may, and indeed usually will, be used differently in different sets of social relations.

(3) Capital in today's world is clothed in the form of money.

In a capitalist social system—and this is what distinguishes such a system—the material components of capital are owned by a small minority of the community. What kind of material components are used, what products are made from these components, and *for whom* these products are made are all questions which are decided by the owners of capital. Capital in the form of money is the essential medium guiding its use in this kind of economy. But in and of itself money capital has little bearing on the course of events, since everything depends on what the owners and managers of money want to do with it. Money capital can lie in idle hoards. It can be used for land, stock-market, and commodity speculation. It can be misapplied,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

to set off waves of inflation without a significant increase in production. Or it can be dissipated in lavishly luxurious ways of living by the upper classes. If the owners of money capital decide to use it for the purchase of equipment and the making of goods, they will search out areas of investment that promise maximum profits and inspire confidence in the safety of the resultant operation. Risk and profit are the constant ingredients in all thinking about what to do with money capital and with components of capital in its material form.

A constant flow of profits is not enough. Because of the possibility that capital will be lost, and because of the pressures of competition, there is compulsion for profits to keep on growing. Capitalists have to make more and more profits to protect their investment, to expand the capital base, and thereby make even more profits. It is for this reason that throughout the history of capitalism long waves of prosperity and great technical achievements produce, at the same time, poverty and insecurity not only among workers, farmers, and the unemployed, but also in backward regions within the advanced capitalist nations and in the colonial, semicolonial, and neocolonial countries. These stark contrasts are the natural and necessary results of social relations which dictate that the material components of capital be used to maximize profits and minimize risks.

If we study the history and nature of capitalism we can understand why Third World nations face formidable obstacles when they try to imitate the ways of advanced capitalist countries. For one thing, many, if not most, of the underdeveloped nations currently have significantly lower levels of per capita production and consumption than existed in Western Europe and the United States when these countries began their upward spiral of industrialization. This relatively greater poverty is itself a result of the long history of penetration and exploitation of the rest of the world by the handful of originally successful capitalist countries. The disruption of established precapitalist economies to create new market opportunities; the redirection of the traditional trade of Asia and Africa to serve the purposes of the Western world; the manipulation of natural resources to extract the agricultural and mineral products de-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

sired by the metropolitan centers; and the creation of new, or corruption of old, elites for more effective control by the dominant countries—all these changes, imposed by force and violence, contributed to stagnation of strategic economic sectors and impoverishment of vast populations.

Third World societies, furthermore, are held back not only by unusually narrow inner markets but by inferior opportunities in foreign markets as well. The "ideal capitalist models" had unusual assistance in building their industrial base—opportunities which helped overcome the inevitable internal barriers to growth as production capacity outstripped domestic demand, and in addition provided new vistas which stimulated the "animal spirits" of entrepreneurs. When domestic markets faltered in England, France, Germany, the United States, and Japan, these countries (or their representatives) shot out to create and take over new markets abroad. There was a world to conquer, and conquer they did. But such opportunities no longer exist. The successful capitalisms have achieved dominance in the realm of international trade and do not complacently entertain the prospect of competition by upstarts.

In the absence of such safety valves as territorial conquest and easy entry into foreign trade channels, the underdeveloped countries must rely ever more on the help of foreign investors. Not only do the latter have a monopoly on modern technology, they also hold the keys to export possibilities. Dependence on foreign monopolies for industrialization, in turn, means that native capitalist classes remain dependent and insecure. Clipping the claws of foreign investors—whether by more favorable contracts, joint ventures, or similar means—does not change the fundamentals of this dependency, nor does it add much vigor to national entrepreneurs. The latter, in their weakness, are unable to challenge contending elite groups, such as vested agricultural interests. The upshot then is a shifting compromise among various sectors of the ruling class. It is because of this that the underdeveloped countries are so irresolute in carrying out the social reforms and the agricultural revolution needed for a buoyant capitalism.

Since the obstacles to successful capitalist development are today so gigantic, the pursuit of industrialization inevitably in-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

volves the accumulation of capital at the expense of keeping the masses down. Agriculture remains backward, investment is insufficient to cure unemployment in urban and rural areas, and wages are kept at pitifully low levels to provide adequate incentives for entrepreneurs. Production decisions are, and must be, made to satisfy the desires of the middle- and upper-income sectors of the population, those that have the money to buy. The technology introduced is the kind most favored by, and closely tied in with, foreign capital, since this is the technology best suited for profit-making and for squeezing into some of the interstices of foreign trade. Brazil is an outstanding example of what I am referring to. Brazil has been successful in taking a significant step forward in industrialization—one in which native capitalists have actively participated, along with foreign investors from a number of advanced capitalist states. With what consequences? The real wages of the working class have declined and the backward agricultural regions have remained stagnant and poverty-stricken.

Technology

Granted, some of you may say, that we should be more conscious of a fetishistic belief in the efficacy of capital, and that we must keep our eye on social relations. But what about the material components? Can the evils of backwardness be eliminated without modern technology? It is precisely this general, and in a sense tautological, way of putting the question which leads to difficulties. For in and of itself technology is no panacea. It too must be examined in terms of the social setting. The decisive questions should be: What kind of technology? For what purpose? By whom will it be chosen and applied?

Thus, if the social purpose, whether guided by individual entrepreneurs or governments, is to meet first the market demands of the people who have money to spend, trusting that with more industrial development and more people at work the benefits of technology will trickle down to the lower classes, then the most modern technology of the Western world is best suited and indeed necessary. But if there is an entirely different social purpose, involving a change in class power, which defines

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

as the first and paramount priority meeting the food, clothing, housing, medical, educational, and cultural needs of *all* the people, then modern technology is no panacea, even though in the longer run various aspects of it will have to be introduced. But a too rapid introduction of modern technology can be harmful, since it may require that important domestic resources be diverted from the most urgent needs of the vast majority of the population.

It is true that there is an aura of magic surrounding the fast-moving automatic machines and advanced chemical production processes that promise miracles of mass production. But these miracles can make only a minor contribution to raising agricultural output to levels necessary to overcome starvation and malnutrition. For this, what is generally needed first are water conservancy projects, irrigation and drainage systems, pipes, pumps, transportation equipment (often of the simplest kind, such as wheelbarrows and bicycles), a variety of improved farm tools and simple machines. Large-scale modern factories could in theory be helpful, but they are not the key to solving the most urgent needs of poor countries. A great deal of what is required can be practically achieved only by the mobilization of labor and its concentration on the most socially urgent projects. Many of the products most essential for the advancement of agriculture can be manufactured in small local factories using unsophisticated and often traditional production methods. Local, small-scale production has the advantage of being more flexible in turning out products adapted to local soil and other natural conditions. Such establishments can be very useful in overcoming rural unemployment and converting previously wasted human resources to constructive ends. A large proportion of the rural work force is needed only in peak agricultural seasons and remains idle most of the year. With the growth of local industry in the countryside, idle labor power can be put to work in manufacturing and construction and still be on hand when needed at seasonal agricultural peaks.

The important point is that if attention is directed to agriculture and to the health, housing, and education of the vast impoverished masses, the technology and the composition of production required will be in marked contrast to the types and

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

patterns normally associated with the utilization of the most modern technology. I am not denying the importance of such technology; I want only to stress that we need to think in terms quite different from, and more complex than, a simple transplant of advanced Western methods of production.

Self-reliance

Above all, what is needed is to shift attention from technology and capital to *people*. Ultimately, successful development depends on the transformation of the people themselves. And since this is so, we must be aware of the limits imposed by the prevalence of a dependent psychology among the peoples of the Third World. This dependency is most striking in the rural areas where the majority of the population generally lives. There the domination of the landlord, moneylender, tribal chief, and petty bureaucrat—enforced by local police, goon squads, and if necessary the national army—is deeply rooted and touches almost every aspect of the peasant's and rural laborer's day-to-day experience. The same kind of dependency exists, though in different form, in the cities as well.

On top of all of this is the cultural dependence and lack of self-confidence stemming from the whole history of formal and informal imperialism. People have been taught that the best products are made in the Western World, that the only ones who can master technology are superior beings of the metropolitan centers. A combination of class oppression and cultural imperialism reinforces the feeling of inability to handle and cope with modern technology. These factors, in addition to the arrogance of the Western specialists who come to install and operate the modern factories, are important contributors to the isolation of the modern technological sectors in the Third World countries and to the perpetuation of reliance on the West for technology.

Technology does not mean machines alone. There is an art in the use of machines. New problems are always coming up in the operation of factories: parts break down and need to be repaired; materials used in one country differ in composition from materials used in other countries, and machines have to be adapted for these variations; products, and therefore the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

processes of production, have to be designed to meet local conditions and needs. If the ability to cope with these problems does not develop internally within a country, its dependence on imported industry and foreign specialists will be continuously reproduced and perpetuated.

In order to bring science to agriculture for the solution of food and raw-materials problems—and it is important to stress that these problems can be solved in most countries—you need a new breed of farmers, farmers who have confidence in themselves, who are not afraid of bosses or moneylenders and who are willing and able to face up to all kinds of difficulties. Once the farmers are convinced that the location of power has really changed and that they are indeed their own masters, their minds can open up to the culture, science, and experimentation needed to produce new seeds and plants with higher yields, and to the employment of improved methods of farming. A whole new social structure is needed in the villages if labor is to be mobilized for the satisfaction of such crying needs as irrigation and water conservancy, activities which can be successful only when there is a proper social approach and the old atmosphere of fear and lack of self-confidence has been replaced by a new feeling of worth and self-reliance.

In industry, too, a change in people is of utmost importance. A new breed of mechanics has to arise: people who are not afraid of machines, who are able to examine them, study them, and take them apart, who understand what they are working with instead of reconciling themselves to being mere appendages to automatic machinery. All the industrially developed countries went through their own development by precisely such means—creating and nurturing vast numbers of mechanics who were able to develop and adapt new inventions, as well as take care of and repair a wide range of already existing industrial equipment. This situation has changed with modern technology. Nowadays in the advanced countries progress is tied to innovations in physics and chemistry under the leadership of highly trained scientists and engineers. These specialists have become a kind of priesthood, worshipped and respected by the rest of society. And when an industrially backward country imports modern technology, it must also import

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the priesthood and join in paying it homage. Such a country is then caught in a trap from which the only possible escape is to develop its own technology.

This does not mean avoiding the borrowing of knowledge and learning from modern science and engineering. All of human history is a record of cultural and technological learning by one people from another. No people have a monopoly on the ability to develop science and technology. But the successful borrowers, those who are able to master and advance the knowledge learned from others, are the ones who borrow on their own terms and in their own ways. If an underdeveloped country today wants to become economically and culturally independent, it too must do its own learning and on its own terms. Most especially it needs to have its own master mechanics and its own ability to study and design industrial processes.

In this connection much can be learned from the early history of the United States. One of the greatest boons to U.S. capitalism was the decision by the British toward the end of the eighteenth century to prohibit the export of machines and the emigration of machinists. When an Englishman went before an emigration officer, he had to show his hands: if the hands did not have calluses that are typical of farmers the applicant was denied an exit visa. This prohibition was undoubtedly a powerful spur to the development in the United States of its own industrial revolution. At first, industrial undertakings were imitative of those in England; but as native mechanics emerged, the United States began to discover new and better ways adapted to its own conditions and needs. Japan's industrial development is also significant. The Japanese did it by closing their doors to foreign investment and learning Western technology on their own. This learning process is slow at first, and it entails making many mistakes, but it is the only way to become the master of technology and of one's own destiny.

I recently came across some comments which make a similar point in an interesting fashion. I refer to an interview with Nobel Prize-winning physicist C. N. Yang, an American of Chinese descent, in *New China* (Fall 1975). Professor Yang was asked how rapidly China's science is developing. He replied:

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The fastest way to catch up in modern science and impress visitors from abroad is to establish a super laboratory, buy all the equipment from abroad and then quickly train graduate students and research workers to do the problems which are currently being done elsewhere. China rejects this method because it would be a showcase, unrelated to the general development of the country.

This was brought home to me one morning in 1973, when I visited a laser laboratory at a university in Hong Kong. It was in an air-conditioned room; there was an enormous imported laser tube, very smooth, very nicely made, and very nicely packaged. They were doing some quite advanced research and I was impressed.

That same afternoon, after I had crossed the border into China, I was ushered into the optics laboratory of Zhong Shang University. I saw room after room of laser equipment, wires sticking out here and there, glass tubing going in all directions. Everything was messy. The contrast was amazing. The tubes weren't nicely smooth; there was no chrome anywhere; and there were all kinds of problems. It was clear to me that in this organic environment there will develop a group of laser scientists who know everything about the whole field, who know the real reason for the existence of the problems that are investigated abroad. I think this philosophy will generate benefits to Chinese science and technological developments.

I too was immensely impressed by the phenomenon described by Dr. Yang in visits to factories in China during a recent trip there. It was exciting to see workers producing the machines that would then be used to make final products in their own factory. According to capitalist standards, these machines were being made inefficiently: highly trained Western engineers would consider this type of production woefully backward. But according to human standards and the needs of the Chinese people at this stage of their development, the inefficient, backward methods were strikingly progressive. In each factory we visited, the workers pointed proudly to machines, some very advanced and precise, that they themselves had made in their own workshops. The practice is to bring together what they call three-in-one teams, including representatives from the shop floor, engineers, and management. These teams, in which workers play a prominent part, begin by taking apart an old machine, figuring out how it works, and then, through trial and error, constructing one of their own. Often, workers had begun by studying machines used in more advanced factories.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Or they would travel to a university to consult specialists. Many of the homemade machines we saw were of a truly advanced type, such as precision gear-shapers, which required knowledge of mathematics as well as skill in machine operations. So the factories started their own schools to teach workers the necessary mathematics and mechanical theory.

What we saw in China was an industrial revolution in process, one in which the main reliance is on the initiative and competence of its own people. Even as they borrow from the West, and at times import whole production systems from the more advanced countries, they are creating the conditions for true independence. At the same time they are meeting the highest social standards—seeing to it that the entire population, and not just privileged classes, are fed and provided with medical attention, education, and the means to the satisfaction of other basic needs.

To sum up: what is needed is a wholesale shift in emphasis from faith in capital and technology to faith in people. This of course means a society that is impatient, one that is not willing to wait for some future technological miracles. And such societies do not develop without a change in the structure of power, without a transfer of power to those classes which will redirect the basic priorities of society toward the elimination of poverty and misery and which will rely on people as well as on modern science and technology.

Once more, only the abolition of the capitalist character of modern industry can bring us out of this new vicious circle, can resolve this contradiction in modern industry, which is constantly reproducing itself. Only a society which makes it possible for its productive forces to dovetail harmoniously into each other on the basis of one single vast plan can allow industry to be distributed over the whole country in the way best adapted to its own development, and to the maintenance and development of the other elements of production.

Accordingly, abolition of the antithesis between town and country is not merely possible. It has become a direct necessity of industrial production itself, just as it has become a necessity of agricultural production and, besides, of public health. The present poisoning of the air, water and land can be put an end to only by the fusion of town and country. . . .

—Frederick Engels, *Anti-Dühring*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ATTICA NOW

BY ANNETTE T. RUBINSTEIN

There are place names in American history which have become more meaningful than geography. Harper's Ferry is one. Scottsboro is another. And Attica is now perhaps the most immediate.

On September 9, 1971, long-festering grievances, triggered by two careless acts of specific injustice, erupted. The grievances included sub(prison)standard physical conditions such as a 63¢-a-day food budget, a maximum 2 showers weekly, and less than minimal medical care; slave labor—25¢ daily wages for almost all black and brown workers while a few lucky white ones had 75¢-a-day jobs; a farcical education program; unnecessary restrictions and arbitrary harassment by the chief warden, Mancusi; arrogant abuse by openly racist guards, free to impose summary corporal punishment or solitary confinement on those who dared resent humiliating epithets; unfulfilled promises of reform by the new state commissioner, Oswald. The eruption became the largest, longest, most solidly interracial of the many spontaneous prison insurrections in our fifty states.

Some 1,200 prisoners—black, Hispanic, native American, and white—controlled a section of the jail for four days, held 39

Annette Rubinstein is Executive Secretary of the Charter Group for a Pledge of Conscience.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

guard-hostages throughout (5 guards who had been injured in the first upsurge and 6 other hostages were voluntarily released on the first day) and secured an observer committee of sympathetic notables whose reports, together with television coverage, brought their attempts at negotiating a nonpunitive resolution into almost every New York home.

The then governor, Rockefeller, refused to negotiate or even show his face, and on September 13 he ordered a special force of his State Police to mount a double air and ground attack, using dumdum bullets outlawed in international warfare. They fired upon a courtyard full of unwarned and unarmed men, killing 10 guards and 29 prisoners. Some of the latter were shot at point-blank range after surrendering. Uncounted others were maimed or permanently injured through neglected wounds and deliberate torture by armed guards during the following 10 days. Even after the state coroner's report had clearly established that the 10 dead hostages had all been killed by the bullets of the attacking force, Rockefeller and other state officials persisted in telling the press that the guards had been thrown from prison windows or had had their throats slit by convicts' knives, and had been castrated as well!

All this is unquestioned fact, described in detail in the 600-page official report of the New York State Special Commission on Attica. The report declared the assault by Rockefeller's State Police to be "the bloodiest attack by Americans on Americans" since the original massacre at Wounded Knee and characterized the prison conditions which led up to the insurrection as a "fiery hell." Nor did it find those conditions exceptional. Indeed, it declared: ". . . that the explosion occurred first at Attica was probably chance. But the elements for replication are all around us. Attica is every prison; and every prison is Attica."

The commission not only summarized most vividly the conditions leading up to the rebellion; it also characterized the criminal irresponsibility—and criminal responsibility—of the authorities immediately thereafter, saying that

> the inmates were not told—and perhaps would not have believed—that the state officers intended to retake the institution with guns. The assault itself was not carefully planned to minimize the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

loss of life; the choice of weapons and ammunition was based upon ready availability, not upon the logic of the specific situation; no safeguards were established to protect against excessive use of force by those who were authorized to fire; no effective control was imposed to prevent firing by those who were not authorized to participate; no adequate arrangements were made for medical care of the severe casualties that should have been anticipated; and no responsible system was established to prevent vengeful reprisals against inmates after the retaking.

"Vengeful reprisals" is strong language for an official report of a committee whose nine members were headed by the Dean of the New York University Law School, Robert B. McKay (now Director of the New York City Legal Services), and personally selected by the chief judge of the New York Court of Appeals and the presiding justices of the four New York State Appellate Division Departments. Still it seems pale and colorless compared to the specific acts of systematic racist inhumanity described not only by prisoners but by outside doctors (some of the prison doctors were themselves among the worst offenders) and by members of the National Guard on duty at Attica immediately after the assault. These "vengeful reprisals"—at first spontaneous abuse by vicious prison guards unchecked and, indeed, condoned but still undirected by superior officers—soon became a deliberate instrument of state policy.

On September 15 Rockefeller ordered an "investigation" of the revolt to cover up previous prison conditions and divert attention from the deaths for which he was responsible. He appointed Robert E. Fischer, head of a special task force created and financed by the state legislature to investigate organized crime, as its head, superseding the powers of the local District Attorney. The public outcry at this action was so great that both majority and minority leaders of the state legislature demanded the creation of an independent "citizens' committee" empowered "to study the Governor's own actions during the uprising." The creation of the McKay Commission, described above, was the result of this demand.

The Fischer committee made it clear from the very beginning that it had no intention of investigating any crimes, major or minor, committed by state employees. It concentrated its efforts on securing indictments of outstanding convict leaders

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

on hundreds of charges, including the only four deaths not caused by Rockefeller's gunmen. (One guard had been so severely injured in the first hour of the struggle that he died in the county hospital, to which he had immediately been sent. Three prisoners were found dead in their cells when the assault was over.)

Long before the assault, however, about a hundred scapegoats—practically all of them black, Hispanic, or native American—had been selected. Some were prisoners who had, over the years, asserted their human dignity against brutal prison officials. Others were men observed from the gun towers to be in positions of leadership in the yard—arranging latrines, distributing blankets, rationing food, or, ironically, setting up a security guard to protect the hostages and individual prisoners from personal attacks. These were all placed in punitive segregation as soon as the yard was retaken. An enormous detective force, under Fischer's direction, proceeded to "interrogate" (in the full Nazi sense of the word) other prisoners so as to build a case against as many of the chosen as possible.

The methods used were incredibly crude. Attorney-General Simonetti, Fischer, and their underlings were evidently intoxicated by their total control of the situation. They had virtually unlimited funds, the defendants were all incarcerated and at their disposal, and all potential witnesses were similarly imprisoned in their power or were state employees completely identified with the prosecution. Almost all the defendants and inmate witnesses were friendless, indigent, and, until actually indicted, not even technically entitled to free legal representation. Hundreds of black and Hispanic prisoners were harassed, intimidated, and tortured for weeks or months until they "remembered" seeing one of the selected scapegoats in the vicinity of a crime before, after, or during its commission. A few of these, as well as a number of white prisoners, were offered early parole or executive clemency as a reward for giving satisfactory testimony before the grand jury and, later, at the anticipated trial.

In each trial to date it has been shown that for every prisoner forced or persuaded to testify as the prosecution wished, there were two, three, or even four offering contradictory testimony to the state investigators who interviewed them. These

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

were never called before the grand jury and their names were never (despite legal requirements) given to the defense. In fact, the very existence of such possible defense witnesses and such exculpatory testimony was illegally concealed by the state.

One of the inmates forced to obey the prosecution in the closed grand jury proceedings turned on his persecutors at the actual trial, where he felt the attendant publicity would offer him some protection from reprisals, and described the way in which his grand jury testimony had been extorted. Charles Crowley, who had been hospitalized after the assault, testified for the state before the grand jury. Called to the stand by the prosecution in the subsequent trial last winter, he declared:

> These officers proceeded to accompany me on my stretcher to the room and they proceeded to beat me for at least a half hour. During the course of the beating I was made to crawl around on the floor and shout "White Power" and kiss their feet. . . . This went on for two days. On the third day these officers came to my room along with some state troopers. . . . I was victimized [sodomized] four times with a stick. They called it nigger sticks. And I was told I was going to die that afternoon. Prior to all this happening they had thrown the body—thrown it up to the door. The body of a black brother. And they threw it up to the door and the blood stayed on the window pane. And Officer Irving Wilson said to me, he pulled out a pearl-handled gun revolver, he said: "You're next, nigger. You're going to die." . . . By the time the BCI, whoever, came, as I said, I was ready to testify against my Mama. . . .

Horrifying as this and other accounts of individual torture by state employees are, they do not begin to give the full picture of deliberate official misconduct on all levels of the state apparatus. The selected victims—62 of the hundred originally chosen for prosecution were finally indicted—were almost all held over a year in conditions of punitive segregation, locked up in a tiny cell with no real sanitary facilities for 23 hours a day of solitary confinement. Some 1,000 of the possible inmate witnesses were equally at the disposal of the "investigators" who unmercifully used every kind of pressure to extort the testimony they wanted. The Wyoming County special grand jury was willing to indict every prisoner brought before it for anything the prosecutor suggested. (Fifteen members of the grand jury had relatives or close friends working as prison guards or police-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

men, and six members had friends or relatives among the guards killed or injured during the rebellion.)

Under these circumstances the prosecution was in no hurry and secured repeated delays, indicting a few prisoners at a time in hopes that some of those indicted or threatened with indictment would "take a plea" and turn state's evidence against the others. Amazingly, only a bare handful of the general prison population have so far succumbed to state pressure, and all of the 62 indicted so far have stood firm for almost four years. ("So far" because the state has refused to dismiss the second grand jury, empaneled May 4, 1974, thus keeping the threat of further indictments present to possibly recalcitrant witnesses.)

Yet even from the prosecution's viewpoint much of the $10 million tax money it has already spent has been wasted. The solidarity of the Attica defendants, the public concern sparked by members of the original observers' committee, the dedication of a growing number of radical civil-rights lawyers, assisted by a fluctuating group of young full-time volunteers, have combined to win several signal victories. Still, every concession forced from the state by the Attica brothers and their understaffed impecunious defense has been countered by brazen misconduct on the part of the prosecution.

Public pressure, implementing the constitutional guarantee of free legal counsel for indigent defendants, forced the state legislature to appropriate $750,000 for legal fees. Judge Ball, head of the judicial system in Erie, arbitrarily decided that funds should be released only to individual counsel, and only *after* a trial was concluded. This prevents the use of such funds in vital pretrial investigation and drastically hampers the development of a common defense strategy as well as the maintenance of the necessary general defense offense. To date less than $100,000 of the money appropriated for them has been released to defendants' attorneys.

After interminable delay the defense secured a peremptory court order enjoining the prosecution to turn over to them the names of prospective witnesses for pretrial investigation. Attorney-General Simonetti's office delivered a list of some 4,000 names—2,000 state employees or former state employees and

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

2,000 prisoners or former prisoners—declaring they could not narrow it down any further. Many listed lacked first names or addresses, and investigation of those who could be located showed that hundreds had not been near Attica since the 1960s and could not possibly be considered potential witnesses. The defense secured a court order directing the prosecution to turn over all notes made by investigators during interviews with prospective witnesses. Simonetti ordered that no written notes be taken, and Fischer provided shredders to destroy those which had already been taken.

The defense was finally granted a change of venue from Wyoming County, scene of the Attica uprising and of the grand jury described above. The prosecution succeeded in having neighboring Erie County substituted for the requested move to New York City, home of most of the defendants and defense lawyers. Judge Ball of Buffalo is a long-time associate of Rockefeller. A 1974 survey of registered voters in his county showed that 69 percent thought the prisoners responsible for all 43 deaths, while 19 percent still believed that the hostages had been knifed and castrated, not shot by the state police.

Yet despite all this, the cases built by Simonetti, Fischer, and company were so flimsy that they could not bear the light of day. One after another they crumbled under cross-examination by defense counsel and defendants acting as co-counsel at their own trials. As Simonetti's assistants were forced to call over and over on the same few pitiful coerced or suborned witnesses, even Erie County jurors became skeptical and voted acquittals. Furthermore, as trial dates drew near the prosecution shamelessly withdrew indictments, substituted lesser charges, or dropped names altogether—after having held defendants imprisoned for three and a half years!

Of the five cases actually tried so far, involving almost twenty defendants, only one has been lost. Two young native Americans, Dacajeweiah (aka John Hill) and Charley Joe Pernasilice, were both originally charged with homicide in connection with the death of the single guard fatally injured during the uprising. They were convicted of murder and assault, respectively, and were sentenced to life imprisonment and four years. Their lawyers have moved to set aside the verdicts on a number

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of grounds, including open judicial misconduct, improper jury selection, and admitted perjury by at least one state witness.

There are still at least four more capital indictments and twelve others pending against 36 Attica defendants, as well as the continuing threat that Simonetti may secure additional ones from his cooperative grand jury. He evidently feels that the estimated additional three years and millions of dollars which such trials would cost would be little enough to pay for washing the blood from Rockefeller's hands.

However, another closetful of skeletons has now been opened which may give less-involved members of the state government reason to compromise. On April 9, 1975, the *New York Times* printed a letter which Simonetti's chief assistant, Malcolm J. Bell, had sent Attorney-General Lefkowitz in January, explaining his resignation. The letter begins: "I hereby tender my resignation as special assistant attorney-general assigned to the Attica investigation. My basic reasons are that the investigation lacks integrity, and I am no longer able to hope that integrity will be restored so long as Anthony G. Simonetti remains in charge." It concludes: "It is now clear to me that the investigation is being aborted beyond my power to help. So long as Mr. Simonetti remains in charge of the supplemental grand jury investigation, I do not believe I can be of any further use to it."

The body of Bell's letter gives detailed evidence as to the selective nature of the prosecution, and of his frustrated attempts to bring vital evidence before the grand jury.

This letter was followed by an even stronger one from Arthur L. Liman, General Counsel to the New York State Special Commission on Attica, addressed to Governor Carey, which was published in the *New York Times* on April 16, 1975. It further emphasized the selective nature of the prosecution and its absolute refusal to hear testimony offered by eyewitnesses immediately after the retaking of the prison, which seriously incriminated state employees. Alarmed by the threat of exposure, correction officers and other state employees demanded protection from the legislature, which quickly appropriated $750,000 to be used for the defense of any officials who might be indicted for offenses committed at, or arising out of, Attica.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

We feel that it would be meaningless at this late date to press for the arrest of a few brutal correction officers. Those indicted might well be chosen as the most expendable rather than the most guilty, and in any event their indictment would be used to whitewash four years of murderous misconduct by their superiors. We also feel that the Attica defendants can expect no real justice in our courts—many of those acquitted have already served more than the maximum sentence they would have incurred had they been convicted.

Of course the legal struggle must go on as long as necessary, but these official revelations suggest a more promising attempt to save time, money, and lives. The chairman of the Black Legislators Caucus in Albany, Assemblyman Arthur O. Eve of Buffalo, who was himself a member of the original Attica observers' committee, has introduced a resolution calling on Governor Carey to grant total amnesty for all who have been, or may yet be, indicted on charges arising out of the events at Attica in September 1971. (This would, of course, include Dacajeweiah and Pernasilice as well as any others who may be found guilty or be coerced into taking a plea.) Hastily presented in the last days of the 1975 session, with no time for voters to reach their representatives, it nevertheless received the support of 46 assemblymen and a promise of proportionate support for a parallel resolution to be introduced by State Senator Vander L. Beatty in the upper house. Both resolutions will be reintroduced when the legislature reconvenes this January.

Every concerned New Yorker should write his or her own representative, in Albany, as well as Governor Carey, urging total amnesty for *all* Attica defendants. It is particularly important to secure upstate legislators' support for the resolution.

Copies of the amnesty resolution, petition forms, and/or a substantial, fully documented pamphlet, *Attica 1971-1975*, will be sent on request by The Charter Group for a Pledge of Conscience, P.O. Box 346, Cathedral Station, New York City, N.Y. 10025.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

CAPITALIST DEVELOPMENT, CLASS STRUGGLE, AND CRISIS IN ITALY, 1945-1975

BY JOANNE BARKAN PROCTOR
AND ROBERT PROCTOR

Italy emerged from the Second World War a semi-industrialized nation with low industrial and agricultural productivity. Once the Italian Communist Party (PCI) decided that a socialist revolution at that time was not possible, the question in Italy became how to rebuild under capitalism. Any attempt to expand production was bound to come up against the problem of low internal demand (wages and per capita income were low, and unemployment was high). The situation was further aggravated by a scarcity of raw materials and foreign currency reserves, and by the disequilibrium between the North and the poor, less developed South.

Given the insufficiency of internal demand to stimulate industrial expansion, influential Italian industrialists looked to foreign demand, and lobbied for the abandonment of the prewar policy of protectionism so that Italy could go in for foreign trade in a big way. This position was sustained by the

Joanne Barkan Proctor is on the staff of *Modern Times*, a labor and community newspaper in New Haven, Connecticut. Robert Proctor teaches Italian at Connecticut College in New London. They recently spent 15 months in Italy.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

United States, which at the time was using all of its powers of political, economic, and military persuasion to develop Western Europe into a capitalist free-trade zone open to American penetration and in opposition to the Communist bloc.

Under fascism the most important sectors of the Italian economy had been agriculture and textiles—the two largest employers—and the electrical-power industry, which, although it provided few jobs, represented the highest concentration of finance capital in the country and accounted for the greatest share of profits. The three sectors which came to dominate the postwar economy—the steel, automotive, and chemical industries—were present and active before the war, but accounted for a much smaller percentage of employment and production. The postwar liberalization of trade greatly favored these three industries. They had pioneered in technology, introducing advanced methods of production, and were thus able to compete for international markets (primarily those of the more industrialized European countries). These markets, and not Italy's internal needs, determined production choices.

Though at first serious misgivings were expressed both in Italy and abroad concerning the country's capacity for economic reorganization and growth, during the twelve years 1951-1963 the Italian economy experienced one of the highest growth rates in the capitalist world, exceeded only by those of Germany and Japan. From 1951 to 1958 the Gross National Product (GNP) grew at an annual rate of 5.3 percent, and this rose to 6.6 percent during 1959-1963, and reached a high of 8.3 percent in 1961.*

But this growth was extremely uneven. The export-oriented sectors of the economy expanded greatly while the others grew slowly or not at all. Such an unbalanced expansion not only perpetuated but eventually increased the underutilization and waste of the country's material and human resources and prepared the way for the years of economic stagnation which followed.

---

* Since all sources used in this article are in Italian, no citations are included. Any reader wishing such information may write to the authors c/o MONTHLY REVIEW.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Within the industrial sector, the production of the "traditional," less technologically advanced Italian industries (foodstuffs, textiles, clothing, footwear and other leather goods, wood products and furniture), catering to both internal and export markets, fell from 43.4 percent of all manufacturing in 1951 to 33.4 percent in 1963. Production in the more technologically advanced industries, more oriented, directly or indirectly, to export markets (the metallurgical, machinery, automobile, nonferrous mineral processing, and chemical industries) rose from 46.0 percent of all manufacturing in 1951 to 57.6 percent in 1963.

Statistics on productivity and profits show the same division of Italian industry into two distinct sectors, one backward and inefficient, the other innovative and efficient:

	Metallurgical	*Chemical*	*Automotive*	*Food*	*Textiles*
Average annual increase in hourly productivity, 1953-1963 (percent)	+ 8.6	+10.8	+10.9	+ 4.6	+ 4.8
Variation in profit margins, 1953-1963 (percent)	+21.5	+41.8	+36.3	—24.2	—15.5

The more productive and technologically advanced export-oriented industries produced nonessential consumption goods (such as electrical appliances and automobiles) at *gradually falling prices* relative to the general consumer price index. The backward and inefficient sectors of the Italian economy produced necessary consumption items (such as food and clothing) *at relatively rising prices*. Thus the average Italian consumer, whose income was lower than that of his counterpart in the more advanced capitalist countries, and who had not yet reached a satisfactory level of consumption of essential goods, found his purchasing power rising for luxury items and falling for essentials. For example, between 1953 and 1963 the cost of fresh vegetables in Italy rose 62.3 percent while automobile prices fell 10.5 percent.

The government's fiscal policy was also at work during

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

this period to spur the growth of the export industries. The so-called Sinigaglia Plan provided cheap steel through the state-financed modernization of the steel industry. ENI, the National Hydrocarbon Corporation, provided cheap energy. The state helped the automotive industry open up markets within Italy itself by building a system of superhighways second to none in Europe. Between 1951 and 1970 Italian automobile purchases shot up 868.4 percent. By 1969 the number of private car owners in Italy was close to that of other European countries. On the other hand, the average daily per capita consumption of animal protein was only 38 grams, compared with 64 in France and 55 in Germany.

One of the biggest losers throughout all of this period was Italy's South, which had many of the characteristics of an underdeveloped Third World country. During the years of Italy's postwar reconstruction the South functioned to provide cheap labor and, later, markets for the industrialized North. Its land became wasted, its people impoverished. The few public-works programs enacted during the 1950s and the powerful system of patronage created by the ruling Christian Democratic Party (DC), which controlled the flow of funds, served to tie masses of potentially unemployed to the DC's electoral machine and to shackle class struggle in the South.

As with the underdevelopment of the South, so too the underdevelopment of Italian agriculture was structurally related to the growth of the Northern export-oriented industries throughout the fifties. Postwar land reform broke up large landed estates, especially in the South, and created a vast system of small farms. These were very inefficient, often barely self-supporting, but they served the purpose of absorbing surplus population while jobs were scarce in the early fifties and of providing cheap labor for Northern industries when the economy began to expand in the late fifties.

It was above all cheap domestic labor which "financed" Italy's postwar economic recovery. From 1948 to 1955 industrial production increased by 95 percent, profits by 86 percent (1950-1955). Yet real wages rose only 6 percent. The export industrialists were thus able to sell their products at stable or falling prices while maintaining profit margins high

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

enough to self-finance further industrial expansion. On the international level, monetary stability and liberalization of world trade provided by American political and economic hegemony over the postwar capitalist world facilitated the conversion of the formerly "protected" Italian economy into an "open" exporting one.

In the immediate postwar years, the leadership of the working class collaborated with the bourgeoisie in rebuilding Italian capitalism at the workers' expense. At that time, the CGIL (*Confederazione Generale Italiana del Lavoro*—the federation of unions representing all sectors of the working class and comprising the major political currents) never questioned the industrial-capitalist economic model, and offered no rigorous program of economic reform or planning. The same lack of initiative in matters of political economy characterized the Communist and Socialist parties. Union-sponsored wage ceilings and strike truces in return for guaranteed employment were common during this period.

At the same time, the Italian ruling class began working to isolate the left politically and to divide the working class. In May 1947 the Socialist and Communist parties were forced out of the coalition government. In April 1948 the Christian Democrats won an absolute majority in parliamentary elections. Thus the political conditions were established for the anti-labor, center-right governments of the 1950s. The unitary labor movement was broken up in July 1948 when the Christian Democratic faction of CGIL seceded and established a second central union (later renamed CISL: *Confederazione Italiana Sindacati Lavoratori*). In 1949 the Social Democrats and Republicans left the now Communist-Socialist-dominated CGIL to form a third union federation, the UIL (*Unione Italiana dei Lavoratori*. The direct involvement of the U.S. government in all these events is an important and well-documented story.

With the working class weak and divided, the years of outright repression and violence began. The government denied the right of assembly in the factory and the right to carry on certain types of strikes. Militant Communists lost their jobs. Labor organizers and strike leaders were arrested. Police often attacked and at times fired on picketing workers. Strong Ameri-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

can pressure and direction fueled the government's anti-labor, anti-left policy: political strings attached to the Marshall Plan and the European Recovery Program, threats of an American boycott of products from factories in which the CGIL was strong, the direct military threat from American troops in Italy, Italy's inclusion in NATO. At the same time the divided unions contributed to their own weakness by failing to organize within the factories or to concern themselves with specific issues such as speedups, accidents, and technological changes that affected the nature and organization of production. The CGIL, for example, the strongest and most combative of the unions, concentrated most of its energy in the early fifties on national political issues. Finally, a continuing high rate of unemployment (8.9 percent in 1951, 8.3 percent in 1956) played an important role in creating a docile working class and in guaranteeing low labor costs. It is important to note, however, that the Communist Party grew in membership and electoral strength during these difficult years.

The situation of the workers changed dramatically at the beginning of the sixties. Much has been written about the reawakening of the Italian working class during the "economic miracle" of 1959-1963. Here we can only summarize the most important factors. Both the consciousness and the composition of the industrial working class were changing. Rapid industrial expansion in the North was bringing home to many workers the blatant contrast between their own low standard of living and the new riches they were creating. At the same time, the Northern industrial working class was taking in many young workers and many "immigrant" workers from the South. These workers proved to be not only combative, but also less concerned than the older generation with differences of party and ideology. The new workers were thus able to achieve a certain unity of struggle that had eluded the leadership of the politically and ideologically divided unions. For the most part, the new "generation" of workers was absorbed into the assembly lines of expanding industry. Here the parcelization of the work process and the reduced level of skill required for each task began to break down the old hierarchy of labor and the attitude of "professionality" typical of older skilled workers.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Meanwhile the unions regained some of the credibility they had lost by their failures in the factories in the fifties. As early as 1955, the CGIL's leadership had recognized the error of not concerning itself with what was happening to the workers in the factories, and in 1960 it decided officially to try to negotiate contracts on all aspects of work and at all levels, national and local. It would be quite a few years, though, before this goal was to be realized.

As the working class and the unions were beginning to change, so too was the political climate in Italy. A variety of factors favored a shift to a center-left coalition government. On the economic level, with the export sectors of the economy expanding, the more progressive elements of the capitalist ruling class began to think about averting costly labor unrest during the economic upswing by bringing the Socialist Party into the government and buying off the workers with the promise of reforms. Although the first such center-left government was not sworn in until 1963, the inter-party negotiations that preceded it for several years made it difficult for the governments of the period to repress the workers as overtly as before.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the economic miracle created jobs and did away with the threat of massive unemployment, at least in certain industries in the North. Some sectors of the economy, such as the machinery and chemical industries, actually began to register shortages of skilled labor. Many workers began to realize that the capitalists couldn't do without them. In short, by the early sixties it was easier to go out on strike, and possible to win.

In 1962, after several years of growing labor unrest and unsatisfactory contract settlements, all principal categories of workers went out on strike. The number of hours lost to strikes that year was the highest since the war, and would be topped only by the massive strikes of 1969. Average hourly wages for industrial workers jumped 18.6 percent between 1962 and 1963.

Italy's economic reconstruction had been almost exclusively self-financed out of the high profit margins the export-oriented industries enjoyed because of low labor costs. Once the industrial workers demanded higher wages, the whole house of cards began to collapse.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The economic history of Italy from 1962 to the present is extremely instructive from a Marxist point of view for what it can teach us about the dynamics of class struggle in an industrialized capitalist nation. For over a decade now it has been the class struggle, and especially, though not exclusively, the consequent rising cost of labor, that has determined Italian economic cycles. Moreover, the class struggle in Italy—perhaps the most intense in any industrialized Western country—presents a case study in how both the workers and the capitalists have found themselves locked in a dialectical process: the only way to avoid defeat has been, for the capitalists, to discover new forms of exploitation, and, for the workers, to invent new forms of struggle which have come increasingly to question capitalist relations of production.

The capitalists first replied to the big wage gains of 1962-1963 by raising prices (consumption goods prices jumped 7.5 percent between 1962 and 1963). Then, in order to combat this new inflation and a balance-of-payments deficit, the Bank of Italy clamped on a credit squeeze in 1963 which all but dried up an already falling rate of investment and sent the economy into a three-year recession (1964-1966).

Inflation followed by deflation. It was Capital's classic counterattack: nullify wage gains by raising prices, then destroy the workers' combativeness by throwing them out of work. The strategy was temporarily successful. Unemployment rose and the number of strikes fell as workers once again worried about losing their jobs. The capitalists used this crisis to restructure the factories for increased productivity through reorganization of work processes and greater automation. Between August 1964 and August 1965 industrial production rose 8.5 percent while industrial employment fell 5.2 percent and productivity per worker increased 14.5 percent. Between January 1964 and January 1965 real wages of industrial workers fell 4.7 percent.

Thus profit margins rose, and by 1967 the Italian economy entered a two-year upswing. But the increased pace of work and the parcelization of the work process through mechanization raised the incidence of industrial accidents and work-related psychological problems. Meanwhile, social services and urban living conditions continued to deteriorate.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

By the spring of 1968 the material conditions of existence within and outside the factories began to push the workers to more advanced forms of struggle both in terms of content and organization. Local strikes, for the most part spontaneous, spread rapidly throughout Italy. Workers were asking for democracy: they wanted to do away with management's authoritarianism in the plants and gain more control over the organization and pace of work. In some factories the workers were contesting as well the union bureaucracy and the undemocratic nature of the union's organization in the plants.

The years 1968 and 1969 mark a turning point in the workers' movement in Italy: in order to win greater control over their working and living conditions, the workers had to gain more direct control over the struggle. This period thus witnessed the birth of three forms of organizing within the plant destined to become an integral part of the class struggle in Italy: (1) the general assembly of all workers (later, 10 hours per year of such assemblies on company time would be guaranteed by national law); (2) shop "delegates"; (3) committees composed of such delegates, soon to evolve into "factory councils" (*consigli di fabbrica*), which in turn would spawn the creation of "industrial zone councils" (*consigli di zona*) within the cities. The delegates were elected by, and came directly from, the particular shop, work team, assembly-line section, etc., which they were to represent.

In the fall of 1969 all major categories of workers were up for national contract renewals. By this time the movement had lost its spontaneous character; most strikes in 1969 were national strikes, with the unions in full command. It was a period of enormous mass radicalization. Over 302 million work hours were lost to strikes in 1969, a figure far above the previous high of 181 million hours lost in 1962.

By the end of 1969 one can discern at least three important changes in the nature of the class struggle in Italy. First, the national union leadership was coming to understand the massive rank-and-file desire to democratize the union organization, and began to create delegates and factory councils in plants where they did not yet exist. Second, in response to mass social unrest and the failure of the center-left governments to enact

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

promised reforms, the unions took it upon themselves to develop a program of social and economic reforms which marks their emergence as a direct interlocutor with government and industry in questions of political economy. Finally, this period saw the birth of several "extra-parliamentary" revolutionary political organizations which continue today to sustain important political struggles and to stimulate debate within the Italian left.

The struggles of 1968-1969 gave workers in the manufacturing industries average wage increases of 23.9 percent and much more control over the processes of production. The capitalists counterattacked in 1970 by hiking prices and indirect taxes and tightening the money supply. But the recession of 1970-1972 differed from that of 1964-1966: now, because of the increased class consciousness of the workers and the strength of the unions, fear of unemployment and the presence of a large industrial reserve army in no way blunted new wage increases throughout the recession.

Generally speaking, despite the two recoveries referred to, the Italian economy has been stagnating since 1963. It took a recession and increased automation to get the economy going again in 1967, and the recent upswing from autumn 1972 to spring 1974 was due only to the fortuitous conjunction of world-wide inflation and a progressive devaluation of the lira, which helped to keep the price of Italy's export goods competitive.

Concern over record inflation (consumer prices rose 6.4 percent in 1972, 12.4 percent in 1973, and 21.6 percent in 1974), balance-of-payments deficits, and increasing indebtedness to foreign financiers prompted the Italian government to adopt a tight-money, deflationary policy beginning in December 1973. This policy, along with the world-wide capitalist depression, all but brought the expansion of the Italian economy to a halt. Since the summer of 1974 industrial production has fallen precipitously, and some observers predict a zero growth rate for the economy as a whole in 1975.

Two trends in particular are at work to undermine the future of Italian capitalism. First, Italy is losing her export markets. This is due in part to depressed conditions around the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

world and changing markets in general, but also to the increased cost of Italian labor and to the fact that, since 1969, worker control over the production process has slowed the capitalists' efforts to raise productivity by automating and increasing the pace and fragmentation of work. Second, Italy's trade deficit has been increasing at a staggering rate. By 1973, even before the oil crisis, it had reached 3,255 billion lire (as compared with an average of 540.2 billion for the period 1968-1971).* For example, agricultural imports made up 21 percent of all of Italy's imports in 1973 and continue to grow. In the past year, the government's severe deflationary policies cut imports and thus reduced the balance-of-payments deficit. But this squeeze on working-class consumption cannot correct the structural imbalances of the economy.

Capitalist prescriptions for solving the present crisis call only for more of the same: expand exports, while trying to reduce imports. Specifically, the capitalists want to *restructure* industry to cut labor costs and end workers' control over the organization and pace of work. Restructuring involves automating and/or decentralizing production (to smaller factories, artisan shops, etc.). The textile industry, for example, has resurrected the "putting-out" system. The capitalists want also to *convert* industry to produce more investment goods (machinery, plant equipment, complete industrial complexes), which for a decade now have been the most rapidly expanding component of Italian exports. Conversion will take time, however, and requires great labor mobility and a long period of unemployment.

Here the Italian capitalists come up against a working class whose unity, combativeness, and high level of political consciousness have a long history: from the factory councils of 1919-1920 to the partisan resistance of the Second World War to the struggles of the 1960s. During the present economic crisis, the Italian workers have continued to struggle and as yet show no signs of buckling under to the threat of unem-

* The current rate of exchange is approximately 670 lire=$1. — Ed.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ployment. In 1974 the unions won not only substantial wage and cost-of-living increases but—on paper at least—a say in lay-off policy and decisions involving production choices and investments. The rank and file, often without the support of national union leadership or the Communist Party, continue to invent new, direct forms of struggle, such as *autoriduzione*, the refusal to pay price increases for electric power and transportation, organized by factory and industrial zone councils.

The precarious economic situation and the intense class struggle necessarily affect the political supremacy of the Christian Democratic Party (DC) which has ruled Italy for the last thirty years.

After the Second World War, the United States and progressive Italian capitalists supported the DC as the best vehicle for relaunching capitalism in Italy and integrating her into the Atlantic Alliance, because only a Vatican-supported, Catholic party could provide a mass base and a strong anti-Communist stance. This party serves as a political umbrella, gathering together various conservative groups such as small farmers, the rural and urban middle classes, and the petty bourgeoisie. During the postwar period, the DC consolidated its political control by building a vast, parasitic power structure involving control of the government apparatus, state and para-state agencies, etc. During the 1960s the industrial sector too became entangled in the DC's web, as more and more industry (now about 50 percent) came under state ownership.

Yet for the past decade it has become more difficult for the DC to hold together this mixed conglomeration of interests. First, the party has been losing elements of its traditional electoral base: small farmers and farm laborers, gone to work in the factories, have become radicalized; white-collar workers, first in private industry and now in the public sector, are moving to the left (among several contributing factors is the elimination of many wage differentials between white- and blue-collar workers, tending to unify the two groups). Meanwhile, the influence of the Church has declined. Finally, powerful interest groups within the DC are coming into conflict with progressive capitalists who would like to streamline the economy by eliminating as many parasitic sectors as possible.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The results of the June 15, 1975, elections reveal just how much the DC's political hegemony has been eroded. In a country where a 2 percent shift in votes is highly significant, the DC fell from 37.9 percent (1970) to 35.3 percent at the regional level, while the Communist Party jumped from 27.9 percent to 33.4 percent. The latter's gains were even greater at the provincial and local levels.

While the left in Italy increased in strength, the right did not sit idly by. During the workers' struggles of 1969, the right initiated a "strategy of tension," characterized over the past six years by bombings, often in crowded public places, and more recently by street violence (including numerous murders of leftists) by neo-fascist gangs. It is now public knowledge that the Italian secret services, working through international neo-fascist groups, helped to plan and finance these bombings, and have been involved as well in several abortive putsches over the past decade. By covertly supporting neo-fascist terror—blaming it on the left whenever possible—and thus creating a climate of fear and confusion, the DC has had an excuse to strengthen the state's police powers and to present itself as the "law and order" party capable of saving Italy from the extremes of fascism and communism.

At the moment, a rightist *coup d'état* in Italy, the threat of which some say was strong in the summer and fall of 1974, seems unlikely. Any such attempt would certainly precipitate a civil war, given the strong anti-fascism of a good part of the population, especially the working class. A coup must be less appealing to Italy's capitalists than an effort to convince labor to "cooperate."

Any discussion of a shift to the left in Italy, and of the possibility of a move toward socialism, must focus on the strategy of the Italian Communist Party (PCI). The PCI, still largely a working-class party (blue-collar workers constituted over 49 percent of its total membership in 1973), now challenges the DC's position as Italy's largest political party, and is the only party on the left with a mass base.

The PCI's strategy since the Second World War—the *via italiana al socialismo*—is based on the assumption that Communists, Socialists, and Catholics can collaborate for the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

gradual transformation of Italian society within the framework of the present bourgeois constitutional state. Faced with, on the one hand, the massive U.S.-NATO presence in Italy and the country's key position in the Atlantic Alliance, and, on the other, the threat of another fascist regime (the fascist power structure was never completely dismantled after the war), PCI has given first priority to strengthening bourgeois democracy in Italy and building a mass anti-fascist (though not necessarily anti-capitalist) base. After the coup in Chile, this strategy was re-proposed as a "historic compromise," which has come to mean some form of collaboration between the PCI and the DC as the only way of solving Italy's present problems. The proposal presupposes a convergence of interests between the working class, elements of the middle class hurt by the crisis, and progressive capitalists. By allying with the DC, the PCI hopes to shield the left from a strong internal rightist reaction and direct or indirect U.S. intervention.

Given this background, it is not surprising that the proposals advanced by various PCI leaders for solving the current economic crisis are, for the most part, based on collaboration with the bourgeoisie. Arguing that socialism is not possible in Italy today, the Communists propose to "rationalize" Italian capitalism through a program of reforms and centralized planning which would eliminate inefficient and parasitic sectors of the economy, develop agriculture and domestic energy sources, and favor more production for collective needs. This is all to be done within the limits of the present export-oriented model.

Concerning the PCI's political aims, one may question the very possibility of a compromise between the DC and the PCI which would produce significant reforms. Any alliance between the two parties benefiting the working class would necessarily undermine the power structure of the DC. The DC knows this well and for now refuses collaboration. At the same time, the magnitude of the PCI's recent electoral victory threatens to render the historic compromise impracticable for two additional reasons. First, the left as a whole amassed 47 percent of the vote, making a national government of the left a possibility. Second, the DC, which has fallen into a state of disarray as a result of the elections, may try to regain its

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

political hegemony by moving to the right, or it may be split by internal disputes and power struggles and cease to exist as a viable political entity. In either case, it would be difficult, if not impossible, for the PCI to collaborate with the DC. The political situation in Italy thus remains extremely fluid. If the PCI does succeed in concluding the "historic compromise" with the DC, the Communists may find that preserving the alliance depends on their willingness to abandon the interests of the proletariat.

As for the PCI's economics, given the gravity of the crisis of not only Italian but also world capitalism, it is hard to see much room for reforming the system to accommodate both working-class and collective needs on the one hand and the needs of capital on the other.

Furthermore, the PCI's general strategy since the war, the *via italiana al socialismo*, raises a crucial question: Can such a "road to socialism," the first objective of which seems to be the rationalization of capitalism, ever lead beyond centrally-planned state capitalism? More generally, is it possible to arrive at socialism by means of a long, peaceful period of gradual reforms?

In opposition to the PCI, which does not offer a revolutionary strategy, several parties to its left suggest alternatives. Generally speaking, rather than build up large memberships, these groups aim to work with the masses and elaborate a revolutionary line which, because it corresponds to the real needs of the working class, will be recognized by that class and will provide the basis for revolutionary consciousness and militancy.

With respect to the "historic compromise," one important revolutionary party, the *Partito di unità proletaria per il comunismo* (PdUP), argues that an alliance between the PCI and the DC woud be a great mistake for many of the reasons mentioned above. PdUP supports instead the formation of a new social bloc of the entire left, including anti-capitalist Catholics liberated from the DC, which would begin and sustain a transition to socialism.

Unlike PdUP, *Lotta Continua*, another important revolutionary organization, would like the PCI to pass from the opposition into the national government. The reasoning is that this

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

would accelerate a conflict of objectives and precipitate a crisis, at which point the working class would force the PCI into a more radical position.

Various goals of struggle proposed by the revolutionary left parties include: employment for the entire labor force, cost-of-living escalators fully commensurate with inflation, direct workers' control over production choices and investments, and an ever increasing economic and political role for the factory, industrial zone, and neighborhood councils. These struggles are proposed not only as the means to avoid having the workers bear the burden of the economic crisis, but also as a series of tactics bound to explode the contradictions between the interests of the working class and capital.

While the revolutionary left acts as a stimulus for debate and exchange of ideas, and exerts some influence at the local level and in the unions, it is nevertheless the Communist Party that plays a decisive role in Italian politics today. The Communists now find themselves at the center of a potentially explosive situation. They are faced with, on the one hand, a mass electoral base demanding social, economic, and governmental reforms, and, on the other, a severe economic crisis which leaves little if any leeway for bringing about change. Given the Communist leadership's commitment to re-launching capitalism and its overriding concern not to provoke any reaction from the bourgeoisie, it can only try to rein in the working classes and persuade them to suffer more and longer in order to save the system. How long and to what extent the PCI will succeed remains to be seen.

The modern laborer . . . instead of rising with the progress of industry, sinks deeper and deeper below the conditions of existence of his own class. He becomes a pauper, and pauperism develops more rapidly than population and wealth. And here it becomes evident that the bourgeoisie is unfit any longer to be the ruling class in society, and to impose its conditions of existence upon society, as an overriding law. It is unfit to rule, because it is incompetent to assure an existence to its slave within his slavery, because it cannot help letting him sink into such a state that it has to feed him.

—Marx and Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

new from

Economic Calculation and Forms of Property / An Essay on the Transition Between Capitalism and Socialism / **by Charles Bettelheim.** This book provides for the first time a complete theoretical framework for the analysis of a society after a successful revolution has taken place but before socialism has developed. Bettelheim makes the important but often denied or ignored point that the successful revolution leaves a society in a transitional stage between capitalism and socialism and that at this stage the society can go in either direction. A pioneering enterprise, following basically from the classics of Marxism-Leninism, the book is in its own right a creative development of Marxism-Leninism as applied to the analysis of the economic problems of the transitional society. CL3608 /$11.50. **Monthly Review Press**/62 West 14th Street, New York, N.Y. 10011/21 Theobalds Road, London WC1X 8SL.

MONTHLY REVIEW

Special sub rates to students: $9 (foreign $10; £4·58)

☐ 1 year $11 (foreign $13; £5·96)

☐ 2 years $20 (foreign $23; £10·55)

Libraries and institutions $16 (foreign $18; £8·25)

Monthly Review Press
62 West 14th Street
New York, N.Y. 10011

Monthly Review Press
21, Theobalds Road
London WCIX 8SL,
England

I enclose $..... I enclose £.....

Please send me MONTHLY REVIEW for ☐ two years ☐ one year

Name .....

Address .....

.....

(Canadian subscribers must pay foreign rate)

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ARGENTINA: PERONISM AND POWER

BY GILBERT W. MERKX

In recent months the endemic Argentine political crisis has intensified. The broad base of support for the nominally Peronist regime of Isabel Martínez de Perón has distintegrated. Social conflict exists in the form of armed clashes, mass demonstrations, strikes, parliamentary manoeuvering, assassinations, and military pressure on the regime. Economic conditions are worsening, inflation has reached new levels, and the government has been unable to mount an effective economic strategy.

The form taken by the Argentine class struggle has long been unique in Latin America, due to the high degree of worker organization, the inability of successive military regimes to destroy the labor unions, and the ideological impact of Peronism. Over the last decade a new element has been added: the rise of urban guerrillas. At present, social conflict in Argentina has entered a phase in which political alignments are changing. The purpose of this article, based on a recent series of inter-

---

Gilbert Merkx teaches sociology at the University of New Mexico. He recently visited Argentina where, he reports, he was appalled by the persecution and suffering of friends on the left.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

views in Argentina with persons of a wide variety of social and political persuasions, is to offer an assessment of the current situation in that country.

The Political Background

The principal achievement of the three civilian and five military regimes which governed Argentina between 1955 and 1973 was to discredit their ability to solve Argentina's political and economic problems. Despite repeated efforts to ban Peronism from politics and destroy Perón's influence over the labor movement, Peronism not only remained the largest political force in the nation but also gradually extended its influence. In the first elections after Perón's ouster, held in 1958, Peronist votes elected Arturo Frondizi president. Allowed to run for provincial offices in 1962, Peronists won victories that led the military to remove Frondizi from office. In 1963 many Peronists cast blank ballots, permitting Illia to win the presidency with only 30 percent of the vote. Peronist victories in the provincial elections of 1966 caused another military intervention and the sacking of Illia. Argentina's traditional parties were unable to capture majority support. Elections without Peronist participation were devoid of substance, and elections with such participation meant military intervention. Dealing with Peronism had become the central political issue for each regime, civilian or military.

Not only were these regimes unable to break the political impasse, but also they failed to cope with the economy, plagued by repeated recessions and high rates of inflation. Argentina's economic dilemma lay in the fact that substantial import-substitution industrialization had merely increased the nation's dependence on traditional agricultural exports of beef and wheat—needed to pay for imports of fuels, raw materials, and machinery. As a result the economy was more dependent than ever on international commodity markets and financial institutions and more vulnerable than ever to alterations in the terms of trade. Between 1966 and 1973 under the regimes of General Onganía, Levingston, and Lanusse, the military attempted to reduce this dependency by encouraging foreign corporate investment. By the time Lanusse left office, 30 of

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the 40 largest corporations in Argentina (excluding financial institutions and state enterprises) were foreign-owned.

Unfortunately for the military and even more so for the nation, the increased role of foreign capital did not stimulate sustained economic growth, but merely increased the vulnerability of the Argentine economy to balance-of-payments problems. The largest single area of new investment was automobile production, leading to intensified demand for imported metals, rubber, and petroleum. Inflation and recession, symptomatic of the economic malaise, grew more acute; and support for the military's economic program dwindled in all sectors.

Argentina was faced with an absence of viable alternatives to Peronism. The traditional parties and the military had demonstrated their incompetence, which made the weaknesses of Perón's government seem far less serious by comparison. To the unions, engaged in a continuous fight for survival since 1955, the virtues of the Peronist past were unquestionable. To the middle classes, an end to economic and social turmoil seemed well worth the return of Perón, whose government had been less dictatorial than the military regimes. Further pressure for change came from the rise of the urban guerrilla campaign, which undercut military claims to provide stability and led to a falling-off of foreign investment.

By 1972 Argentina was suffering recession, inflation, strikes, mass demonstrations against the regime, and guerrilla warfare. At this point General Lanusse finally concluded that a retreat from power was the safest course for the military. Arrangements were made, after touchy negotiations with Perón, for an election in which Peronists could compete, providing that Perón himself would not head the ticket. The election provided for a run-off between the two top candidates if no one should win a majority on the first round. Lanusse's gamble was that the Peronists would fail to gain a majority on the first round, and that in the second round the anti-Peronists would rally to give victory to a candidate of the traditional parties.

No account of the outcome would be complete without some discussion of the tactics followed by Perón during the years of military rule. Even if at the time of Perón's exile his following had been sharply reduced, during the years of chaos

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

which followed he had widened his base of support to include not only the union leadership and the majority of rank-and-file workers, but significant portions of the nationalist middle sectors and the increasingly leftist student movement. The Peronism of students and intellectuals was increasingly Marxist, reflecting the leftward development of Argentine political thought after the Cuban Revolution. Local manufacturers and businessmen, threatened by foreign capital, were receptive to attacks on imperialist penetration.

Perón took advantage of the growing disaffection of these disparate groups by broadening the range of his pronouncements. He encouraged the guerrillas by expressing admiration for Cuba, China, and Egypt, and by reminding them of his pioneering "Third Position" of the postwar years. To union bureaucrats he spoke with respect of Swedish social democracy, and to emissaries from the military he lauded De Gaulle. He talked to Argentines of the need to combat imperialism, but to North Americans of friendship and cooperation. He supported the doctrine of *socialismo nacional*, building socialism at the national level while defending local capitalists from the onslaught of foreign corporations.

Perón used a variety of secondary leaders and associates, whose interpretations of his positions were often sharply at variance with one another. He discarded those who became a liability through having been caught in an exposed position as he altered his emphasis from time to time. He was also quick to disown any of his lieutenants who might have developed a following that could threaten his own. Some of those in his movement who attempted to defy his orders and cooperate with the military, such as labor bureaucrats Augusto Vandor and José Alonso, were assassinated.

The most prominent groups on the left to reject Peronism were Trotskyist organizations. One, the ERP (*Ejército Revolucionario del Pueblo*), conducted a guerrilla campaign with some dramatic successes. Another, the PST (*Partido Socialista del Trabajador*), rejected the guerrilla route and focused on the *concientización* of rank-and-file workers. The PST and the ERP were rivaled by Peronist groups of similar orientation, the former by the *Peronismo de Base* group, and the latter by

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

several Peronist guerrilla organizations, the most prominent being the Montoneros, the FAP (*Fuerzas Armadas Peronistas*), and the FAR (*Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias*). Despite theoretical disagreements between the Peronist left and the non-Peronist left, the latter did not attack Perón openly.

There is considerable debate over the wisdom of the course taken by the left in supporting or at the least not opposing Perón. More to the point is that such a strategy held the promise of rapid success. Perón was the only national figure to espouse left-wing objectives, and certainly the only one with a mass following. Even those Marxists who distrusted Perón viewed Peronism as a vehicle of national consolidation against imperialism, and as a necessary stage in the drive toward socialism.

Perón's Return to Power

The strategy of the Argentine left seemed to bear fruit when Perón's candidate in the elections of March 1973, Hector J. Cámpora, was elected by a majority in the first round, to the dismay of the military and the euphoria of popular sectors. Faced with a debacle of their own making, the military stepped aside.

During the few months of Cámpora's government, many of the hopes of the left seemed on the point of being realized. All political prisoners were released from jail. The cabinet included two ministers identified with the Peronist left, Righi (Interior) and Puig (Foreign Relations). A Marxist, Rodolfo Puiggros, was named Rector of the University of Buenos Aires. Diplomatic ties with Cuba were re-established. The "Social Pact," freezing wages and prices, was signed by the employers' federation and the unions. An atmosphere of intellectual ferment and impending social change swept the nation.

Within the diverse elements of Peronism, however, strains were intensifying. Union bureaucrats, reactionary members of Perón's own entourage, Peronist party officials, and businessmen were frightened by the changes taking place. These tensions came to a head in June when Perón's scheduled return at Ezeiza Airport became the scene of a bloody shootout between rightists and leftists, causing Perón to land elsewhere.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Cámpora was asked to resign so that Perón could be elected president, and obediently did so. By choosing his wife, Isabel, as his vice-presidential running mate, Perón effectively avoided commitment to any sector of Peronism, since she was identified solely with him. The new elections were held in September 1973, and Perón was overwhelmingly elected.

He had the good fortune of taking office at a time when the international commodity markets were temporarily running in Argentina's favor. Improved terms of trade made possible a sharp reduction of inflation. Union-management conflict was at a new low, and production boomed. Superficially, the economy seemed to be in better shape than for decades.

It soon became apparent that Perón's policies were moving to the right. The Superior Council of Peronism was established, dominated by labor bureaucrats and right-wing Peronists, which promptly expelled the Peronist Youth. Left-wing Peronist officials were replaced in both the national government and state positions. Perón denounced the activities of the guerrilla groups, which were focusing on acts against foreign businessmen and reactionary labor leaders. Police activities were stepped up and given Perón's personal encouragement. A purge of the universities began. In spite of these actions, an open break between Perón and the left did not take place, even though it seemed to be drawing near.

At this critical juncture Perón died. His widow assumed the presidency on July 1, 1974, amidst great uncertainty over her position on the issues which were splitting Peronism. These doubts were soon dispelled as it became clear that her regime stood even further to the right than that of Perón.

The key figure in Isabel's government turned out to be José López Rega, a former policeman who had served as Perón's personal secretary during the final years of exile. Under López Rega the purge of leftists in the university, the state bureaucracy, and the Peronist Party accelerated. More frightening was the wave of assassinations which swept the country, supposedly conducted by a right-wing group calling itself the AAA (*Acción Anticomunista Argentina*), but generally acknowledged to be parapolicial, despite government denials. Victims of the assassinations included prominent left-wing

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

intellectuals, politicians, lawyers, cultural figures, student activists, and local union leaders or workers suspected of left-wing activities. Known victims of the right-wing death squads soon numbered in the hundreds. Still others were not identifiable, since bodies were often burned or mutilated beyond recognition. In addition, the AAA announced "death lists," leading to the flight from the country of many whose names appeared.

The rise of the AAA was followed by a sharp increase in left-wing guerrilla warfare across the nation, particularly in the industrial centers of Buenos Aires and Córdoba and the impoverished province of Tucumán. The most spectacular coup of the guerrillas was the kidnapping and successful ransoming of the Born brothers (of the international grain conglomerate) for the record sum of $62 million. It seems clear that the right-wing terrorist campaign, while savaging the moderate left, was ineffective against guerrilla groups.

The probable reason for the regime's espousal of right-wing terrorism lay in its desire to reimpose a developmentalist economic strategy of the sort attempted by the Onganía government and carried out by the Brazilian military. The death squads seem to be a straightforward borrowing from the Brazilian case. For such a strategy to succeed in attracting foreign investment requires the repression of leftist violence and the subjugation of the labor movement. The López Rega circle felt that they could succeed where Onganía had failed, due to the popular mandate of the Peronist government, the support of the labor movement, and the hands-off attitude of the military. The government was attempting to be both more popular than the Onganía regime and at the same time more repressive, through the AAA.

The Confrontation

Events were soon to show that this approach was disastrous on nearly all fronts. Matters came to a head when the government launched its new economic program by dismissing the minister of the economy, a Perón appointee named José Gelbard, and replacing him, in early June 1975, with a López Rega ally, Celestino Rodrigo. Rodrigo's first step was to imitate in

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

exaggerated form the massive devaluation initiated eight years earlier by Onganía's minister of the economy, Krieger Vasena, who had increased the peso cost of the dollar by 40 percent. Rodrigo did so by 100 percent. This was followed a few days later by a speech in which the President welcomed foreign investment and guaranteed the security of laws protecting that investment. In the early days of June the government followed the devaluation by a series of unprecedented price increases: subway and train tickets were doubled, airplane fares increased by 120 percent, state-marketed gasoline doubled in cost, and government-controlled beef prices doubled.

The government promised wage adjustments to compensate for price increases. The first unions to come to terms with employers and the state (acting as binding arbiter) were given only 45 percent increases, less than half of what would have been necessary to offset price increases. As other wage settlements leaked out over the following days, it became obvious that the state was attempting to buy off the most militant unions by giving them increases of up to 120 percent. This led in turn to a wave of protests from unions that had been persuaded to settle for less. The union leadership began to sponsor a series of mass demonstrations, ostensibly to show support for the government, but actually to demonstrate the muscle behind their wage demands.

Realizing that its attempt to split the unions had failed, the government then tried a new and tougher approach. The President, placing her prestige on the line, announced that all contracts were to be cancelled and that instead an across-the-board settlement of 50 percent would be given to all unions, with an additional 15 percent spread over the rest of the year. The following day 100,000 workers filled the Plaza de Mayo in a huge protest, with no attempt made to conceal the anti-government character of the demonstration. In response, the President summoned the labor leaders to her residence and gave them a dressing-down, refusing to alter her direction.

The government had embarked on a collision course with its own popular base of support. Two days later the nation was paralyzed by a massive general strike, completely successful. The government had failed to force worker acceptance of

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

a sharply reduced level of living and a development strategy premised on foreign corporate investment. The impasse was broken by the intervention of the armed forces, not on the side of the government but on the side of the workers, in the person of Admiral Emilio Massera, Commander-in-Chief of the Navy, who discreetly informed the President that the military was supporting the unions in their demands for the restoration of the contracts and for the ouster of López Rega and his henchmen.

The President had no choice but to remove López Rega and restore the contracts. She still attempted to surround herself with his friends, but received a further rebuff when the Peronist-controlled Senate named Italo Luder as next-in-line for the Presidency over her objections, thus removing from the succession the head of the Chamber of Deputies, Raúl Lastiri, who happens to be the son-in-law of López Rega. In the days which followed she was forced to make further changes to remove other López Rega partisans from her cabinet. For a few days it seemed as if Isabel's government was about to fall.

The situation temporarily stabilized with the naming of the fourth in a series of cabinets, this one headed by Colonel Vicente Damasco in the key position of Minister of the Interior. Damasco had been close to Perón and represented the central tendencies in Peronism close to those of the labor movement. His naming touched off a crisis in the armed forces, resolved for the moment by the resignation of the Army Chief-of-Staff, Albert Laplane, and by Damasco's resignation of his own commission. Damasco had support from middle-level elements in the officer corps favorable to a moderately nationalistic Peronism, but he was opposed by senior officers who did not wish the armed forces to be implicated in any of the regime's policies.

It is plain that, through her commitment to the policies of López Rega, the President lost the prestige inherited from her late husband. She remains in office partly because she is no longer seen as dangerous, with López Rega removed, and partly because the power struggle has not yet been resolved.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Analysis of the Configuration of Power

An analysis of the failure of the López Rega line and the situation in which the country now finds itself requires an examination of the social divisions both within Peronism and in the larger political scene. Under López Rega, the Peronist movement split into three wings: the left, the administration, and the labor movement. Open warfare existed between the left and the administration, as well as total disagreement on the course of national policy, which the left saw as the repudiation of everything nationalist and socialist in the Peronist tradition. The repressive tactics of the administration have forced the Peronist left underground, and its future influence on national policy will come through its efforts against the regime rather than from inside the regime.

A more subtle but more important struggle exists between the labor bureaucracy and the left for control of the workers movement. Strikes in Córdoba and Villa Concepción have shown that Marxist influence among rank-and-file workers is growing. The Trotskyist PST appears to be widening its base among workers at the expense of Peronist groups. One position on the left is that its future lies less in guerrilla warfare than in the gradual development of Marxism in the workers movement.

Conflict between the union leadership and the administration became the critical issue, however, on which López Rega fell. Despite the antipathy of the union bureaucrats towards the guerrillas, they were not about to accept government policies which would alienate them from the rank and file. Union officials were only too aware that if they depended on the regime for their position, their own days were numbered. However "economist" the Argentine union bureaucrats had become, they were familiar with the effects of state domination of unions in Brazil, Uruguay, and Chile. They wanted a government they could control, not one which would control them. When López Rega and the administration attempted to make the workers movement the victims of their development policy, the union leadership did not hesitate to fight, demonstrating in the process that the labor movement was stronger than the government.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

On the larger political scene, the positions of the military and the political parties are important. The military is clearly divided, with a minority of senior officials favoring a military takeover, and another minority of more junior officials favoring a more active stance in favor of left-nationalist policies along the lines of the Peruvian regime. The dominant sentiment in the military, however, is to wait on the sidelines until Peronism has discredited itself. These officials have refused to support repressive government policies in Villa Concepción and elsewhere, and have refused to allow the military to be used for purposes of strikebreaking or preventing mass demonstrations. The military has succeeded in making it clear that it does not support the present regime, and that it poses an alternative. That alternative, however, is one which the military does not wish to impose unilaterally. On the other hand, should the unions and the political parties request their intervention then it might well be likely.

The political parties, traditional as well as Peronist, have also been attempting to maintain a critical distance from the administration, without going so far as to cause its fall. As politicians, they are reluctant to see a new military regime, which would once again destroy their chances of taking power. The various parties are hoping that the government will survive until elections in 1977, and that the maintenance of constitutional arrangements will allow them to gain office then.

Like the political parties, the labor unions are reluctant to see military intervention. They would prefer to have direct influence on policy making in a reconstituted regime under Isabel. Only in a situation in which the regime appears to threaten the very survival of the labor movement, as was the case in June 1975, would the unions turn to the military for assistance.

In short, the unions support the status quo, the political parties are waiting to pick up the pieces, and the military is waiting to be called into action by the unions and the parties. None of these groups is particularly happy with the current state of the nation, but none is likely to act to change it in the short run. The administration is no longer the threat to existing arrangements that it was under López Rega, and is now the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

object of attempts to influence policy rather than the source of policy.

The weakening of the administration improves the relative position of the guerrillas, however, and they continue to expand their efforts to accentuate the national crisis. Recent guerrilla attacks have increased in number and size, and may well succeed over the coming months in forcing a change in the current political stalemate. Such a change can only be in the direction of military rule, a step the military is reluctant to take without a broader base of support.

The most basic change to have taken place in the Argentine situation is the changed status of Peronism. The Peronist return to power, followed by the subsequent disintegration of the movement, has removed from the center of the political stage the conflict over the reincorporation of Peronism. In a real sense, Peronism has been demystified and is no longer feared by the military nor idealized by the working class. Perón hin·self is no longer the figure around whom Argentine political debate centers. Instead the issues are more fundamental: questions of national economic strategy, of the relationship between national and foreign capital, of the role to be played by different social groups in setting national policies.

In this situation, new alignments are possible, though changes in this direction, such as the cooperation between unions and the military to oust López Rega, have so far been tenuous and short-lived. Should the government muddle through until 1977, it is possible that elections might result in the election of a moderate Peronist such as Damasco, with tacit military support. If the economy continues on its present disastrous course, the situation might result in the reverse, a military takeover with tacit union support. A new attempt by military hardliners to impose a Brazilian solution seems less likely than ever after the success of the unions in blocking the López Rega policies. For the traditional parties to play a significant political role, they will first have to demonstrate a major growth in public support in the next elections, not at present seen as a likely prospect.

All of the political combinations likely to emerge in the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

near future may well become hapless victims of the economic contradictions which beset Argentina's dependent economy. Sustained economic growth is not possible given the structure of the Argentine economy, and there is no likelihood of that structure being altered by the policies of any conceivable military, bourgeois, or moderate Peronist government. Successful imposition of Brazil-type developmentalist policies is impossible, given the strength of the workers' movement. The guerrillas may become strong enough to bring down the current regime, but it is unlikely that they will ever take power unless they develop a mass base in the working class. Any genuinely socialist alternatives to the present situation will therefore be dependent on the outcome of the struggle for control of the workers movement, which will be of long duration. In the short term, the success or failure of any particular government will be largely dependent on a factor quite out of Argentina's control: the state of international commodity markets.

One of the ironies of Argentina's situation is that it bears a number of striking resemblances to the condition of its former imperial mentor, Great Britain. In both countries recent reformist labor regimes have proven ineffectual in the face of economic stagnation, inflation, and real declines in the level of living. Also in both nations political conflict has sharply intensified without offering any short-term prospects for meaningful change.

The interesting difference between Britain and Argentina lies in the relative strength of the British superstructure. In Britain, respect for law, tradition, and the existing political institutions is so strong that, despite policy disasters, growing social conflict remains channeled into wage and electoral disputes. In Argentina, the superstructure has always been weak and is now more so than ever before. Social conflict has long since spilled over from the ballot box and picket line into open bloodshed. The fundamental contradictions of the Argentine economy and society thus remain without resolution despite Perón's brief return to power. The immediate prospect is for further violence and loss of life. The best that can be said about the situation is that in Argentina, unlike most of the rest of

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Latin America, the working class is in a position to defend its immediate interests, with or without the conventions of parliamentary democracy.

Since this article was written, in September 1975, intrigue and violence in Argentina have risen. Damasco did not survive Isabel's temporary withdrawal from the Presidency. Luder was a disappointment as Acting President. Cabinet shuffles continue, presidential elections have been moved from early 1977 to late 1976, in hopes of some electoral solution, and Isabel is in and out of the hospital as the situation dictates. Union bureaucrats are again at odds with each other, the war between the guerrillas and the military has intensified, devaluations continue, and unemployment rises. In short, the stalemate remains.

* * *

Since this article went to press we learned that a group of Chileans living in Argentina were arrested and imprisoned by the Argentine authorities on November 27. All are academics or professional people and, according to reports received in the United States, all are members of the Chilean Socialist Party, which is also the party to which President Allende belonged. Among those arrested is our close friend Ernesto Benado, a professor of engineering, who was the director of the Spanish-language edition of MR during the years it was published in Santiago, and who held important positions in the Allende government. The list of those arrested, which may not be complete, is as follows: Ernesto Benado, Luis Bravo Moreno, Juan José Bustos, Alicia Guillermina Gariazzo, Sergio Letelier Sotomayor, Sergio Muñoz, Catalina Palma Herrera, Roberto Pizarro, Gabriel Salinas Alvarez, Ximena Zavala San Martín.

We strongly urge readers to protest this gross violation of the right of asylum. Send telegrams and letters to the Argentine Embassy, 1600 New Hampshire Ave. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20009 and/or to the Argentine Mission to the United Nations, 300 East 42nd St., New York City 10017. Also contact the Latin American desk of the State Department requesting that pressure be brought on the Argentine government to release the prisoners and allow them freely to leave the country.—THE EDITORS

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

MARTI ON THE UNITED STATES

INTRODUCTION

By Philip S. Foner

The pieces appearing below were written by José Martí while he was serving as New York correspondent for leading newspapers in Latin America: *La Nación* of Buenos Aires, *El Partido Liberal* of Mexico, *La Opinión Pública* of Montevideo, among others. Martí served as correspondent for the Latin American press from 1881 to 1895. No one had previously had a chance to interpret the United States to so many people in Latin America, and Martí made full use of this opportunity. His newsletters covered every aspect of American life, but they are more than reportage; they also represent intelligent critiques of American politics, education, and culture. Martí showed that he was not only a competent, articulate synthesizer of descriptive details, but also understood the changes taking place in American society in the years between 1880 and 1895—the stratification of economic classes, the alienation of American workers, the transformation of competitive into monopoly capitalism and its impact on American expansionism—and the danger this held for Latin America.

When Martí arrived in the United States in 1880, he was immediately attracted, even dazzled, by its democratic institutions, its creative power, and the opportunity it provided for every kind of individual initiative. To one coming from Cuba, Spain, and

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

some of the Latin American republics—with their feudal societies, social castes, clerical hierarchies, and artificial inequalities—the North American democracy seemed indeed a Promised Land.

Little by little, however, the bitter reality of many aspects of life in the United States cleared away the mist from his eyes. Martí had arrived in the midst of a radical transformation in economic and social life, and he was quick to realize that his concept of the United States as a land where social distinctions were being obliterated and where the poor had equal opportunities with the rich to enjoy the fruits of democracy was in need of revision.

The 1880s were years of great workers' struggles. In cities and towns, the armies of labor organized and gave expression to the pent-up bitterness of years of exploitation in a series of strikes that shook the nation to its foundations. Never before had the United States witnessed labor struggles of such vigor and scope.

Martí observed and reported these radical changes. A number of these reports are published in *Inside the Monster: Writings on the United States and American Imperialism* by José Martí, published in July 1975 by Monthly Review Press, translated by Elinor Randall and others, and edited by Philip S. Foner. The first piece below, "Knights of Labor Strike," is reprinted from this volume. The second, however, is here published in English for the first time. Originally it appeared as part of a three-part article, the first two parts of which were published in *El Partido Liberal* in Mexico City, and the second part in *La Nación,* with the dateline, New York, May 16, 1886. This second part was reprinted in Spanish in volume 10 of Martí's *Obras Completas.* But the part which appears here, "The First of May, 1886," remained unknown until it was discovered by Martí scholars in Mexico City, and published in the Cultural Supplement of the Mexican periodical, *Siempre,* in June 1962. It appeared also in *Bohemia,* Havana, on May 23, 1975, too late to be included in the MR Press volume of Martí's writings on the United States.

KNIGHTS OF LABOR STRIKE

. . . We are at the height of a struggle between capitalists and workers. The first can count on bank credit, funds expected from their debtors, payment of bills on fixed dates, and knowing where they stand at the end of the year. For the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

workers there is the daily reckoning, the urgent needs that cannot be postponed, the wife and child who eat in the evening what the poor husband worked for in the morning. And the comfortable capitalist compels the poor worker to work at a ruinous wage.

Those who live in luxury, thanks to colossal speculations, are urging Congress, for purposes of keeping the Treasury full at all times, not to lower the enormous duties afflicting production and trade throughout the nation. These excessively high duties, as soon as harvests decline or some product becomes scarce, cause excessively high prices. For the capitalist, a few cents per pound on foodstuffs amount to little on an annual balance sheet. For the worker, whose existence depends upon pennies, these pennies immediately deprive him of the basic necessities. The worker demands a wage that enables him to eat and clothe himself. The capitalist denies it to him.

At other times, impelled by the knowledge of the excessive profits that the capitalist obtains from a position that keeps the worker in extreme poverty, the worker might rebel in demanding a wage that allows him to save the amount needed to apply his skills independently, or to support himself in his old age.

But these uprisings are no longer isolated cases. The labor unions, which are unproductive in Europe and distorted by their own creators for having proposed violent and unjust political remedies together with just ones, are productive in North America because they have proposed to cure the visible and remediable ills of the workers only by peaceful and legal means.

There is no longer a city without as many associations as trade unions. The workers have gathered into a colossal association known as the Knights of Labor.* By the thirty thousands,

* The Noble and Holy Order of the Knights of Labor, founded in 1869 by nine garment cutters in Philadelphia, grew in two decades to an organization of more than 700,000 members. It became the leading rallying point for American workers during the 1880s, and brought into one organization workers of all races and nationalities, except the Chinese, and united workers regardless of sex and religious belief. It sought especially to cut down the distinctions between skilled and unskilled workers. Headed at first by Uriah S. Stephens, its chief leader in the 1880s was Terence V. Powderly.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

as at this moment in Pittsburgh, they stand with folded arms, steadfast and spirited, before the iron foundries that stubbornly deny them the wages they demand. As in New York, the trains are stopped, the ships are at rest, produce is piled up on the loading platforms of railroad stations, and commerce throughout the nation is suffering a severe slowing down, and all because the freight loaders are asking the railroads for a wage that will let them eat meat.*

They are asking for twenty cents an hour, plus the assurance of two dollars' worth of work per day, because a man who must travel many miles to and from his job, must eat away from home, has a wife and children there, and must live in a costly city in order to work, cannot live a city life on less than two dollars a day.

The railroad companies, caring little for their freight loaders, refused to meet their demands, and for a month now the two hostile forces have been at loggerheads.

The entire city is on the side of the disregarded freight loaders. How courageously they have endured their month of indigence! What a pleasure to see them as if suddenly ennobled, showing their dignity, clean and polite, sometimes appearing in large relays, walking through the streets in a quiet and orderly manner, sometimes coming to meetings held in the middle of squares, on abandoned docks, or in modest assembly rooms! Here they are making a rostrum out of a cart loaned by a lusty Irishman, there out of a pile of crates, in another place out of a slight rise of ground. It is becoming an extremely purposeful battle!

---

* In the summer of 1882 the freight handlers of the New York Central & Hudson River and the New York Lake Erie & Western railroads, members of the Knights of Labor, struck for an increase of pay from 17 to 20 cents an hour. Freight rates for merchandise moving west had recently risen, so the public sympathized with the strikers. At first, railroad officials—Jay Gould, Cornelius Vanderbilt, and John Field—brought in inexperienced strikebreakers, especially Italians, who were unable to keep freight from piling up, and the shippers appealed to the courts for help in keeping the freight moving. Strikers were arrested and jailed, and when the railroads hired experienced strikebreakers, freight began to move westward. Even though the Central Labor Union of New York raised $60,000 for the strikers and boycotts were invoked against firms helping the railroads, the strike was broken.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Now it is obvious why the most menial kind of work must not be deprecated. Those trunk-rollers, those sack-pushers have stirred up and hampered the commerce of the entire nation. The railroad companies, taking into account the extreme poverty of the poorer classes, sought and found thousands of other loaders at once. Most were Italians, unaccustomed to this kind of hard labor; some were Germans, far too virile for slavery; some were fugitive Jews from Russia, whose sudden tremendous hardships deprived them of strength and spirit.

At first it was believed that, since the loaders were being replaced, they would either go back to work again for the same low wages, or would leave their tasks to the newly hired workers. But it turned out that the novices were not such nimble loaders as the rebels, since hundreds of full wagons were waiting in vain at the gates of the colossal warehouses, and since rough young fellows from the neighborhood never tired of harassing the newly hired men who were working in those warehouses, and are still working there, surrounded and protected by heavy detachments of police. And thanks to their patience and practical wisdom, as it now stands the replacement workers are abandoning their employers in a body and bravely joining the rebel freight loaders in their protest. Today all of them—Italians, Germans, and Russian Jews, embracing one another in a brotherly manner on the streets and coming to enthusiastic meetings where all three languages are spoken equally—are demanding the new wage and the new guarantee of the railroad companies, which a short while ago raised their freight rates for no reason.

This marks a great event in the struggle. Formerly, if the country's workers decided to strike, the employers would approach the Italians, who were willing to work for a low wage. But now, since the Italians are resisting because they realize that if better working conditions are achieved for others, they will be achieved for themselves, the employers will have to yield to the just demands of the employed. For it is incredible that because of just demands, a worker whose fortune lies in the strength of his arms should run the risk of leaving his desolate house in hunger and misery.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

And this is how things stand: the railroad men arrogant, and the freight loaders confident and aided by generous sums of money given by the work force of the whole nation, by wealthy people of good will. The corps of workers are mingling and establishing intimacy in an astounding fashion.

They are coming together rapidly, like men now ready for the fight. Not only does each work force have its own funds, but all of them together are creating an additional general fund to be used as a permanent treasury for every strike. Up to the present there has been justice. May good fortune grant that once the workers have achieved their ends, justice will not be distorted by rage and jealousy. For in this nation of workers, a workers' league for offensive purposes would be a tremendous thing. They are in it already. The struggle will be such that it will move and stir up the universe. These new laws are seething and bubbling over. Everywhere this is an age of renewal and remolding and putting things back on their hinges. With powerful and vigorous anger, the past century cast out the elements of the old life. This century, hindered in its passage through the ruins which at every instant threaten and incite with galvanic life, deals with particulars and preparations and is accumulating the durable elements of the new life.

La Nación (Buenos Aires), September 15, 1882
Dated New York, July 15, 1882

THE FIRST OF MAY, 1886

Enormous events took place in Chicago, but rebellion exists throughout the nation.* In the United States, which is guilty of

* The references is to the great eight-hour-day demonstrations on May 1, 1886. While workers in every industrial center downed tools in demand for the eight-hour day on May 1st, the greatest demonstration took place in Chicago where 40,000 workers went on strike, and more than 45,000 were granted a shorter working day without striking.

The eight-hour movement in Chicago was followed, as is well known, by the Haymarket Tragedy. Martí's writings on the Haymarket Affair are discussed and included (in part) in *Inside the Monster*.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

having brought to the country, through false economic doctrines, a greater number of workers than its industries could naturally sustain, a firm and active struggle has been in preparation for years—the same just and stable struggle which in other industrial nations makes use of workers against those who maintain a social system which the workers have decided to overthrow. The reasons are the same. Things are not right when an honest and intelligent man who has worked tenaciously and humbly all his life does not have at the end of it a loaf of bread [sic] upon which to lay his head, or a dollar put away, or the right to take a tranquil stroll in the sunshine, so necessary for old people. Things are not right when the one who in the cities "waters railroad shares"—which is like watering wine to make it appear as if there were more than there is—lives a contemplative life of leisure so exasperating to the miner, the stevedore, the switchman, the mechanic, and to every wretched person who must be content with seventy-five cents a day, in raw winter weather, all so that the company can pay its shareholders profitable dividends, based upon a false capital, much larger than that actually used. Things are not right if shabby women and their pallid youngsters must live in tenement cubicles in foul-smelling neighborhoods, their men must leave before daybreak, in stained suits and torn coats, with scanty lunches packed in little tin lunchboxes, to dig, to build, and to raise monuments in places where the air is pure and the surroundings beautiful —places from which they must set out at nightfall for their distant homes, hungry, sleepy, and embittered, to eat, drink, and procreate—hurriedly and in the dark, amid the reek of beer and gasps of hatred—a generation of anemic children who are born inebriated.

The reasons are the same. The rapid and evident concentration of public wealth, lands, communication lines, enterprises, in the hands of the well-to-do caste that rules and governs has given rise to a rapid concentration of workers. Merely by being gathered together into a formidable community which can, at one stroke, extinguish the fires in the boilers and let the grass grow under the wheels of the machinery, the workers are able successfully to defend their own rights against the arrogance and indifference with which they are regarded by those who

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

derive all their wealth from the products of the labor they abuse. Public lands are falling into the hands of the railroads and the tycoons, leaving little room—when tomorrow these industrial balloons burst, when excess industrial production is reduced to real necessities—for unemployed workers to occupy the land. Shrewd industry never tires. The corporations, composed of princes of the stock exchange, who live like monarchs, find in their accumulated capital an increasingly easy way of compelling the workers to work for the wretched pittance the enterprise requires, in order to distribute these millions among their chief noblemen. If this continues, there will soon be no more land upon which to take refuge, nor any way of resisting the corporations which, by virtue of their wealth, procure victory in the contests for votes for those who make the laws for their own gain and apply them for the benefit of those who exalt or finance them. This awakens in working-class thinkers the desire to remedy their ills.

THE BLACK LIBERATOR PRESS

AN EYE TO CHINA
DAVID SELBOURNE

Introduction: **STUART HALL**
Photography: **CHARLES PARKER**

268pp. with 50 photographs.

"In Walter Benjamin's terms, an exemplary, and indicative performance from the writer . . . . few accounts could match this text". **Stuart Hall.**

"A unique and powerful book, truer and fuller than volumes of straight reporting". **Neville Maxwell.**

Order through booksellers, or direct from the publishers:
THE BLACK LIBERATOR PRESS, 67 Helix Road, London, S.W.2.

Price U.K. £1.50 plus 20p postage
U.S.A. $4 85 cents including postage.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

NEW FROM
THE ORGANIZATION OF ARAB STUDENTS
U.S. and CANADA

"THE KISSINGER MID-EAST PEACE TRAP"

a pamphlet that attempts to tie together the following:

- The nature of the Kissinger pacification plan for the Mid-East area
- The role of Saudi Arabia, Israel, and Iran in the Vietnamization of the Mid-East
- The hidden causes behind the October 1973 Arab-Israeli war
- The energy crisis Faisal-style
- The Palestinians and the road to Geneva
- The debate between the "realist" and "rejectionist" Palestinian factions
- On the democratic secular state of Palestine and why the Jews should support it
- Is Zionism a national liberation movement?
- A critique of the two-state solution to the Palestinian problem
- What is to be done and undone

OTHER RECENT O.A.S. PAMPHLETS:

1. Sadat's open door policy...to where!!
2. The ruling power and class alliance in Egypt
3. Oil and investment in Oman
4. Israel and the Third World

For single copies of any of the above O.A.S pamphlets 40c (20c per copy for orders of five or above)

Subscribe TO

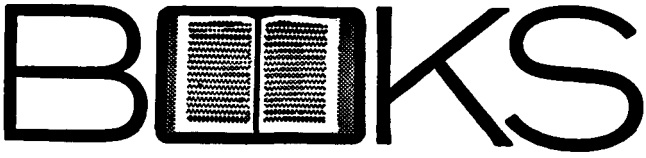
"The Arab Student Bulletin"

Published by the O.A.S. on a bimonthly basis. The BULLETIN deals with current Mid-East developments and presents them from a progressive perspective.

SUBSCRIPTION RATE FOR 6 ISSUES OF THE BULLETIN $1.00 (includes postage).

Order from: O.A.S. P.O.B. 369
E. Lansing, Mi., 48823

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



THE ANACHRONISM OF THE WORK ETHIC

By Albert Ruben

Working: People Talk About What They Do All Day and How They Feel About What They Do by Studs Terkel. New York: Pantheon, 1974, $10; paperback: Avon Books, 1975, $2.25.

All the Livelong Day: The Meaning and Demeaning of Routine Work by Barbara Garson. New York: Doubleday, 1975, $7.95.

A young mother on a park bench watches her child at play. She chats inconsequentially with the woman next to her who in due course signals she's ready to advance the new relationship: "What does your husband do?"

Our ingenuous young mother draws a breath. "Well, most mornings he gets the children up and off to school, and then he does his exercises, and we have breakfast, and then he goes over to the XYZ plant and operates a lathe and probably has a beer with his pals on the way home, and then he plays with the kids or helps them with their homework till dinner, and then . . ."

A diverting fantasy. It would never happen. Our habit of defining ourselves by how we earn money is too ingrained to per-

Albert Ruben is a husband and a father who plays tennis and chops firewood and writes screenplays for motion pictures and television.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

mit such a responsive answer. The reply to the question would surely be more on the order of, "He works at the XYZ plant."

"What do you do?" The unspoken words, of course, are *for a living.* What do you do for a living? The question is the means we customarily use to measure one another upon a first encounter, and the answer to it tells us all we think we need to know to pass preliminary judgment. Our jobs, ahead of all other qualities and accomplishments, are our credentials. Despite a decade of soul-searching and myth-puncturing and consciousness-raising, we continue in our conviction that work is ennobling—to the enrichment of the ruling class. The work ethic survived the challenge of the sixties. The counterculture is in retreat, taking with it its unsettling suggestion that work is "not where it's at." The notion that we are what we "do" remains firmly in place, and neither Studs Terkel's *Working* nor Barbara Garson's *All the Livelong Day* does much to disturb it.

Working is a thorough if not exhaustive exploration of the way all manner of jobs are regarded by the people who hold them. Terkel allows his subjects to speak for themselves by transcribing, without comment and with the intrusion of only an occasional question, his tape-recorded interviews. From janitor to jockey, from farmer to airline stewardess to gravedigger, more than 130 working people describe how they feel about the way they earn their living. They are a remarkable group, so remarkable in fact that one wonders how many lifeless interviews the author had to abide in order to accumulate such a rich assortment. No matter; we are grateful for his diligence.

Garson's study, subtitled *The Meaning and Demeaning of Routine Work,* is both less ambitious and more personal. Here, too, the author quotes extensively from her encounters with workers as she traveled the length of the country, renewing her faith in the proposition that "while capitalism stinks, people are something else." If in the process we learn perhaps more about the author than we do about her subjects, that's all right. With her heart unashamedly on her sleeve, Ms. Garson is a good companion.

Both books are likely to do more to perpetuate the identification of work and worth than to dispel it. By elevating work to a basic drive, Garson wholeheartly embraces the work ethic. "Work," she tells us, "is a human need following right after the need for food and the need for love." With no evidence offered in support of this assertion, it might be argued that it is only the need for food and for a secure environment in which love is possible that

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

makes us go off each day to our jobs. Win a fortune on the lottery and who among us would not stay home to wrestle with the problem of how to occupy our leisure time? Idleness is only sinful when conjoined with poverty. We would escape censure by purchasing out of our winnings those symbols of luxury which the leisure class has conveniently alchemized into safe-conducts, equal in authority to industriousness, to the esteem of our fellows.

Garson further reveals her devotion to the work ethic when she laments the fact that a young mill hand works his shift for his pay rather than, as his father before him, for the gratification of doing a job well. She notes with apparent approval that the father thought nothing of remaining continuously on the job for 19 or 20 hours in order to complete a given task. "This used to be considered a good mill," says the father, "because you were always sure of fourteen hours, six days." A man who welcomes the opportunity to labor eighty-four hours a week in a lumber mill is not necessarily to be pitied, but it is at least open to question whether he should be offered as an exemplar of a better time. The question which Garson fails to pursue is which man—father or son—has adapted best to life in a capitalist society. The son who views the job, in the words of his mother, "as a means to an end"? Or the father who sought in the job an end in itself? Her failure to deal adequately with this and similar questions seems less one of refusal than of oversight. It is as though the questions bobbed to the surface in the author's wake while she happily held her course, unaware that she'd hit something.

While Terkel flirts with the need to re-examine the place which work occupies in our system of values, he never gets around to embracing it seriously. His absence of ardor is probably attributable to his determination to remain in the background while his subjects get on with their recitals. Still, the flirtation, no matter how tentative, is welcome. For example, in his introduction Terkel suggests it is time for men and women to leave behind mind-deadening tasks and "go on to other matters. Human matters." Well and good. But how? If those same men and women are never allowed to forget that their merit is measured by the hours spent on the job to the exclusion of all others, we begin to understand not only why working people feel lobotomized, but more importantly why they find it difficult to believe they are capable of altering their condition.

The reader of these books is left with a sense of paradox. From these accounts, it would seem to be the owner class which daily breathes life into the concept of class warfare, while the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

working class would like nothing more than to declare an armistice. The cumulative effect of Garson's and Terkel's interviews is one of management-induced alienation. To the boss, the workers are the enemy, necessary evils to be fed and used and never trusted. He proceeds from the assumption that his workers will work as little and as poorly as possible. He does so because he perceives the nature of the relationship between himself and his workers as inherently antipodal. Any argument that his elaborate system of controls over the way his workers function is merely in the interest of efficiency falls under the weight of repeated accounts of what workers do to thwart that system. Treated like enemies, they behave like enemies. The boss's prophecy is fulfilled. Manifestly necessary, the war goes on. But is it necessary? Sometimes explicitly, often by vague, groping indirection, the subjects of these interviews voice their desire to be part of the team. Unmistakably, the impression is conveyed that they would love to be loved, love to be encouraged to do their best instead of dared to do their damndest. Equally unmistakable is that the boss's commitment to class struggle is total and irreversible. The reservoir of productive energy which the subjects of these books point to like so many divining rods will remain untapped until the struggle is ended and workers determine the circumstances of their own labor. Only then will the continued usefulness of the work ethic be seriously challenged, possibly to be replaced by an ethic in which the unspoken words in the question "What do you do?" in place of *for a living,* might become *to serve the people.*

So much wit and spirit and tragedy inform the testimony in the books under review that it is difficult to single out examples. Every reader will be differently struck. The reader who remains unmoved through the accumulated eloquence has turned a bitter face to the wall.

A production-line worker in a cosmetics factory: "Your figure develops here too. You sit on these stools and your hips spread more every year. If it weren't for the layoffs we'd be spreading out like a cookie on a cookie sheet. But every once in a while the company kindly gives you a layoff so you can collect unemployment and get back into shape. Layoffs is one of the benefits here."

A steelworker: "If a carpenter built a cabin for poets, I think the least the poets owe the carpenter is just three or four one-liners on the wall. A little plaque: Though we labor with our minds, this place we can relax in was built by someone who can work with his hands. And his work is as noble as ours. I think the poet owes something to the guy who builds the cabin for him."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

(*Continued from inside front cover*)
more than enough to cover its costs. It is much too soon to speculate on how many new names we may ultimately be able to add to our subscription list, but the results to date (the latest figure is around 800 which is close to a 10 percent increase) encourage us to hope that it may be possible to expand MR's readership enough to put the whole operation, press as well as magazine, on a new and much more stable foundation. More subscribers will mean more book buyers and more MR Associate members, and at some point the increase in quantity will turn into an increase in quality. To hasten this process, you can do two things: (1) let us know of any potentially productive lists you may be familiar with, and (2) ask us for copies of the mailing you would like to distribute personally to a list of your own making.

A preliminary version of Harry Magdoff's Review of the Month in this issue appeared in No. 42 (November 1975) of *Merip Reports,* the publication of the Washington-based Middle East Research & Information Project. In the same issue of *Merip Reports* there is an informative article on "Oil Revenues and Industrialization" by Joe Stork, author of MR Press book *Middle East Oil and the Energy Crisis.* Individual subscriptions to *Merip Reports* cost $7.50, and the address is P.O. Box 3122, Columbia Height Station, Washington, D.C. 20010.

In our issue of April 1975, we published an article on the Hungarian "New Left" in which we explained that since all footnote references in the manuscript sent to us were to Hungarian titles and publications, we had deleted them. A reader has written to inform us that quite a few of these articles and books have appeared in English translation, as have other works of the same group of authors. All in all, our informant has compiled a quite impressive bibliography of Hungarian New Left writings, too extensive for inclusion in this space. But if you would like to have a copy please send a stamped and self-addressed envelope and we'll be glad to send you one.

We have reported in this space, beginning last May, on the arrest and imprisonment of Dr. Haydée Alarcón who was actively engaged in putting out the Spanish-language edition of MR in the years it was published in Chile. Thanks largely to protests arising from these reports, she was recently released and given asylum in Mexico where she will be teaching dental surgery in a university-sponsored program for the study of rural communities. We join her in thanking all those who participated in the effort to secure her release, especially the MR readers who circulated petitions and sent cables and letters, and Action for Women in Chile which collected thousands of signatures on petitions for her and other Chilean women prisoners. On arrival in Mexico, Haydée Alarcón wrote to us: "Please I wish you to help take Fidelia Herrera out of Tres Alamos. It is urgent that pressure be brought to bear at a very high level. They do not want to let her leave the country. Cables, letters, petitions asking her release and that she be permitted to take asylum abroad should be sent to General Augusto Pinochet, Edificio Diego Portales, Santiago, Chile; and to Chilean Ambassador Manuel Trucco, 1736 Massachusetts Ave, Washington, D.C. 20036."

For news of the arrest, in Argentina, of Ernesto Benado who was the director of the Spanish-language edition of MR in Chile, see page 51.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

You can build a socialist library at half-price

by joining

MONTHLY REVIEW ASSOCIATES

Membership entitles you to:

- *A discount of 50% off the list price* of any MR Press book. A $12 book for $6, or a $3.95 paperback book for half price, represents a considerable saving—enough to enable you to buy twice as many books.
- A one-year subscription to MONTHLY REVIEW (if you are already a subscriber we renew your sub automatically).
- A free copy of one of the following MR Press books: (1) Harry Braverman's *Labor and Monopoly Capital: The Degradation of Work in the Twentieth Century* (list price $12.50), which Paul Sweezy, in a foreword, has called "a contribution of surpassing importance to the understanding of the society we live in"; (2) Rayna R. Reiter, ed., *Toward an Anthropology of Women* (list price $15), an important new book which challenges traditional anthropology and demands that it incorporate feminist critiques into its work.

Help MR Press become an effective press of the Left; help the magazine extend its influence, and help yourself to some important books by joining the Associates now.

Monthly Review Associates 62 W. 14 St. N.Y., N.Y. 10011

I enclose $..... Please enroll me as an MR Associate.

Please send me the free book of my choice from the list above:

.....

☐ I am already a subscriber.

Check category below

☐ $ 30 - $49; £13 • 75 - £20 • 50	Supporting Associate
☐ $ 50 - $99; £21 - £41 • 50	Sustaining Associate
☐ $100 and over; £42 and over	Foundation Associate

Name .....

Street .....

City ..... State ..... Zip .....

Please make check payable to Monthly Review Associates.
Those who wish to pay in sterling should remit to Monthly Review
21, Theobalds Road, London, WCIX 8SL, England

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED